# EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY OPERA AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN FRANCE, 1875–1918

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## ABSTRACT

WILLIAM GIBBONS: Eighteenth-Century Opera and the Construction of National Identity in France, 1875–1918
(Under the direction of Annegret Fauser)

In the wake of the disastrous Franco-Prussian war, French musicians and audiences sought ways to reaffirm the greatness of their nation. One strategy was to look to the glories of the past as evidence of continued French superiority. In this dissertation, I will examine the role of eighteenth-century opera in constructing a compelling musical past. In particular, I will focus on three composers with vastly differing reception histories in France: Mozart, Gluck, and Rameau, all of whose works received attention both on and off the operatic stages of Paris during the time period of this study. The Austrian Mozart was a favorite throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, serving to present Paris as the cosmopolitan capital of civilization. By 1900, however, performances of his operas ground almost to a halt in favor of revivals of Gluck's works, a composer who could be adopted by the French and made into a source of national pride. Rameau, finally, represented the apex of the purely French *tragédie lyrique*—an important dramatic genre for establishing a nationalist rhetoric of music history, but one that also encountered difficulty in gaining popular success at the *fin-de-siècle* given its musical style. By tracing the critical and compositional reception surrounding these composers and the revivals of their works, I will offer a new look at how music of the past can be used to support narratives of national identity, as well as provide new insight

into the French reception histories of three of the most influential composers of the eighteenth century.

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## BUILDING THE OPERATIC MUSEUM

André Theuriet's 1874 poem "La Grand'tante" presents us with the image of an elderly great aunt. Although she exists in the "present"— the post-war environment of 1870s France—she inhabits another time altogether:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Dans le calme logis qu'habite la grand'tante* | In the calm home where the Great Aunt lives |
| *Tout rappelle les jours défunts de l'ancien temps,* | Everything recalls the bygone days of former times, |
| *La cour au puits sonore et la vieille servante,* | The yard with sonorous wells, and the old servant, |
| *Et les miroirs ternis qui datent de cent ans.* | And the tarnished mirrors from a century ago. |
| | |
| *Le salon a gardé ses tentures de Flandre,* | The salon has kept its Flemish tapestries, |
| *Où nymphes et bergers dansent au fond des bois ;* | Where nymphs and shepherds dance amid the woods; |
| *Aux heures du soleil couchant, on croit surprendre* | When the sun is setting, you believe you can catch |
| *Dans leurs yeux un éclair de l'amour d'autrefois.* | A spark of love from long ago in their eyes. |
| | |
| *Du coin sombre où sommeille une antique épinette,* | From the dark corner where rests an antique spinet, |
| *Parfois un long soupir monte et fuit au hasard,* | Sometimes a long sigh rises and falls at random, |
| *Comme un écho des jours où, pimpante et jeunette* | Like the echo of the days when, pretty and young, |
| *La grand'tante y jouait Rameau, Gluck et Mozart.* | The Great Aunt played Rameau, Gluck, and Mozart there. |
| | |
| *Un meuble en bois de rose est au fond de la chambre.* | A rosewood chest is at the heart of the chamber. |
| *Ses tiroirs odorants cachent plus d'un trésor :* | Its aromatic drawers hold more than one treasure: |
| *Bonbonnières, flacons, sachets d'iris et d'ambre,* | Candy boxes, bottles, bags of iris and amber, |
| *D'où le souffle d'un siècle éteint s'exhale encore.* | From which the breath of a century still exhales. |
| | |
| *Un livre est seul parmi ces reliques fanées,* | A solitary book is among these withered relics, |
| *Et sous le papier mince et noirci d'un feuillet,* | And under the thin and darkened paper of one page, |
| *Une fleur sèche y dort depuis soixante années :* | A dried flower has slept for sixty years: |
| *Le livre, c'est* Zaïre, *et la fleur, un œillet.* | The book is *Zaïre*, and the flower a carnation. |
| | |
| *L'été, près de la vitre, avec le vieux volume,* | Summers, near the window, with the old volume, |
| *La grand'tante se fait rouler dans son fauteuil…* | The Great Aunt turns in her armchair… |
| *Est-ce le clair soleil ou l'air chaud qui rallume* | Is it the bright sun or the hot air that revives |
| *La couleur de sa joue et l'éclat de son œil ?* | The color of her cheeks and the spark of her eyes? |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Elle penche son front jauni comme un ivoire* | She inclines her brow, yellowed like ivory, |
| *Vers l'œillet, qu'elle a peur de briser dans ses doigts :* | Towards the carnation, which she is afraid to break in her fingers: |
| *Un souvenir d'amour chante dans sa mémoire,* | A memory of love sings her in her memory, |
| *Tandis que les pinsons gazouillent sur les toits.* | While the songbirds twitter on the roofs. |
| | |
| *Elle songe au matin où la fleur fut posée* | She dreams of the morning when the flower was put |
| *Dans le vieux livre noir par la main d'un ami,* | In the old black book by the hand of a friend, |
| *Et ses pleurs vont mouiller ainsi qu'une rosée* | And her tears moisten like dew |
| *La page où soixante ans l'œillet rouge a dormi.*[1] | The page where for sixty years the red carnation has slept. |

Faced with the desolation of her current situation, the Great Aunt lives in her past, reminded of her former happiness by the presence of historical objects, and, particularly, French cultural relics. The salon walls are covered by (Franco-)Flemish tapestries. The book that contains her most precious keepsake, the dried flower, is Voltaire's *Zaïre*. Her rooms is replete with ancient candy boxes and perfume bottles, evoking a time of frivolity and excess. And, of course, the spinet piano softly echoes the strains of Rameau, Gluck, and Mozart that once filled the house. In the absence of an acceptable present, the Great Aunt turns instead to the past for support. In this respect, Theuriet's Great Aunt has much in common with her homeland; she may be seen as an allegorical representation of France's cultural politics in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

In the wake of France's humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, the nation was forced to look to the past for validation of its greatness. The collapse of the Second Empire in 1870 and the subsequent political disaster of the Commune sent Paris into an unprecedented crisis of national identity. As historian Robert Gildea puts it:

[1] "La Grand'tante" was published in Theuriet's 1874 collection *Le Bleu et le Noir*. This text is taken from *Poésie de André Theuriet, 1860–1874* (Paris: Lemerre, 1879), 137–38.

"The defeat of 1870 probably inflicted more pain on the French nation that any other defeat in its history, even that of 1940. The defeat was sudden, unexpected, incomprehensible."[2] Such a dramatic turn of events required a significant response in order to maintain (at least in the minds of the French) the semblance of France's dominance on the international stage, if not militarily, then culturally. In response the Third Republic emphasized what Pierre Nora has famously termed "*lieux de mémoire*" ("places of memory"): objects, locations, and historical figures that, like the Great Aunt's books, piano, and various bibelots, were imbued with symbolic cultural value—rallying points, as it were, for a national identity.[3] These *lieux*, whether in the forms of literal museums or just concentrated sources of nationalism, permeated nearly every aspect of French culture, serving as symbols for the historical authority and power of France.

Music was no exception; by the time of the war, in fact, the idea of an "Operatic Musuem" had been germinating for some time. In a review of the 1861 revival of Christoph Willibald von Gluck's opera *Alceste*, A. Thurner, the music critic for *La France musicale*, called for the Paris Opéra to become a "*Louvre lyrique*, where classical works, alternating with our great modern productions, would be the proper nourishment to form a new generation of composers and artists."[4] In this scenario, the Opéra—the Académie Nationale (or Impériale) de Musique—assumes the same cultural role occupied by the Louvre, the pinnacle of the preservation of the French past. Such a conception of the role of the Opéra in French society was radically new. Certainly,

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[2] Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 119.

[3] Pierre Nora, ed. *Les Lieux de mémoire*, 3 Vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

[4] *La France musicale*, 27 October 1861. "Notre première scène doit être un Louvre lyrique, où les ouvrages classiques, alternant avec nos grandes productions contemporaines, soient la sève fortifiante propre à former une nouvelle génération de compositeurs et d'artistes."

throughout the nineteenth century all the major music theaters of Paris maintained works in their permanent repertoires long after their initial stagings. Operas by Rossini, Donizetti, Verdi, Mozart, and Meyerbeer, to name a few, were continually revived decades after their composition, to such an extent that the Opéra remained nearly inaccessible to young composers.[5]

The critical difference between such a situation and Thurner's "*Louvre lyrique*" is one of intention on the part of the theaters and, by extension, of the State. Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* (1829), for example, was more or less constantly in the repertoire throughout the century because it was certain to sell tickets, and because audiences were likely to complain if deprived of such a crowd favorite for long. The purpose of the "*Louvre lyrique*," by contrast, was at least in part the edification of opera-goers in the history of music. The influential critic Stéphen de La Madeleine, also writing on the 1861 *Alceste* revival, supported such an educational approach to programming operas: "The exhibition of the immortal but awe-inspiring masterwork [*Alceste*] is a magnificent lesson that the State, worthy protector of the arts, offers to these active youths who have carried out…a progress full of promises, in devoting themselves to the cult of the old masters. It is by leaning on the past that one takes possession of the future."[6]

An interest in music from an earlier time was certainly not a new development of the 1860s. As Katherine Ellis and others have thoroughly demonstrated, the performance

[5] For a discussion of the artistic hierarchy of the opera houses in the nineteenth century, see Hervé Lacombe, *The Keys to French Opera in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Edward Schneider (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), and in particular Chapter 7, "The Parisian Operatic World."

[6] *L'Univers musical*, 31 October 1861. "L'exhibition de l'immortel mais terrible chef-d'oeuvre est une magnifique leçon que l'État, digne protecteur des arts, offre à cette jeunesse laborieuse qui a réalisé…un progrès plein de promesses, en se consacrant d'elle-même au culte des vieux maîtres. C'est en s'appuyant sur le passé qu'on prend possession de l'avenir.

of "early music"—to use a notoriously slippery term—was common in France particularly after the midpoint of the nineteenth century.[7] A number of organizations were created around this time to sponsor concerts of early music: the Société des Concerts de Chant Classique (founded 1860), the Société Académique de Musique Sacrée (founded 1861), and the Société Sainte-Cécile (founded 1865), to name only three. Performers such as Wanda Landowska and Louis Diémer began to deal with historical instruments as more than quaint curiosities, gaining celebrity for their interpretation of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century keyboard music. Early music even became a frequent sight on programs at major concert series such as the Concerts Lamoureux and Pasdeloup and at the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, as well as large-scale events like the 1889 Exposition Universelle.[8]

But as prominent as early music may have been during this time, it was all but absent from the most prominent opera houses of Paris, the Opéra and Opéra-Comique. Smaller audiences of devotées were capable of sustaining isolated performances of major works, while the larger audiences of the major concert series were evidently interested mainly in repeating the same tuneful and easily understood excerpts from operas and dance music. Sitting through an entire opera by Lully, for example, would have been largely unthinkable to audience members, and consequently would have been ruled out as unprofitable (if not outright ridiculous) by the managers of the opera houses. In order for the ideal of the "*Louvre lyrique*"—an Operatic Museum—to be realized, something had to change. The symbolic importance of reviving earlier opera had to become more

[7] Katharine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past: Early Music in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[8] On the role of early music at the 1889 Exposition Universelle, see Annegret Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World's Fair* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 27–42.

beneficial to the opera houses than the possibility of losing (or reducing) revenue, or, to use Pierre Bourdieu's framework, the cultural capital (symbolic value) gained by producing such a work had to counterbalance any possible loss to monetary capital (economic value).[9]

Such a shift in cultural capital would occur less than a decade after Thurner's appeal. Though the construction of museums dedicated to the preservation (and establishment) of the national memory, and thus identity, was an ongoing process through much of the nineteenth century, this task assumed a new level of importance in the decades before the turn of the twentieth century.[10] After the war it did not escape critical (or public) attention at the *fin de siècle* that the gradual canonization of composers and masterpieces that had continued throughout the nineteenth century was heavily Germanic. In 1870, works by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven were ubiquitous on the concert series of Paris, Weber was almost equally as common, and Wagner's influence was beginning to have a significant effect on the French musical scene. The possibility that the arts, like the political map of Europe, could fall under Germanic domination was simply unacceptable. As Anselm Gerhard points out, after 1871 "all universalist trends in Parisian cultural life came to an abrupt halt, and the 'capital city of the nineteenth century' began its slow decline toward a poorly disguised provincialism."[11] The antipathy

[9] The concept of cultural capital permeates many of Bourdieu's works, but perhaps the most straightforward exploration of the idea is found in Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction: critique sociale du jugement* **(**Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979).

[10] For a brief but insightful overview of the relationship between cultural memory and the creation of identity, see John R. Gillis, "Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship," in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 1–24.

[11] Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 394.

between France and Prussia during this turn of the century was remarkable; on several occasions during the 1880s and 1890s, for example, French courts convicted people on charges of defamation merely for alleging that an individual or business was "Prussian."[12] In Christophe Charle's words, France

> was now challenged by fledgling nations such as Germany and Italy that repudiated the former French cultural hegemony which dated back to the Enlightenment as well as the universalist ideals of the French Revolution. As a result, a type of cultural nationalism emerged which gradually spread into many fields, including literature, music, and of course the fine and decorative arts.[13]

Demonstrating clearly that the French arts were—and always had been—equal or superior to those found on the other side of the Rhine required the skillful reweaving of historical narratives, a task eminently suited to the institution of the museum.

To that end, the late nineteenth century saw an explosion in the number and quality of state-sponsored art museums throughout France.[14] The specific goals of these institutions varied widely, but served a larger common purpose: the display of a shared artistic heritage. Museums are, in many ways, dedicated to the preservation of cultural memory. But they also serve to create that memory; putting "history" on display in the form of historical objects inevitably constructs narratives of the past, and the careful selection and manipulation of those objects controls how those narratives are interpreted.

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[12] Eugen Weber, *France, Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1986), 106.

[13] Christophe Charle, "Opera in France, 1870–1914: Between Nationalism and Foreign Imports," trans. Jennifer Boittin, in *Opera and Society in Italy and France from Monteverdi to Bourdieu*, ed. Victoria Johnson, Jane F. Fulcher, and Thomas Ertman (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 243.

[14] For an overview of the development of museum culture in France, see Daniel J. Sherman, *Worthy Monuments: Art Museums and the Politics of Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1989).

"A walk in an art museum," David Carrier eloquently informs us, "is a narrative under another name, for you need but describe what you see as you walk to write a history."[15] Thus, the visitor to this museum constructs a narrative from the evidence at hand—a powerful tool in the hands of those that wish to shape the understanding of history and national identity.

In terms of musical culture, the purpose of reshaping history was to convince the French public (and, to a lesser extent, other nations) of the nation's music-historical superiority. No other institution was better suited to serve as a reminder of France's glorious artistic heritage than the Opéra. Founded by Louis XIV in 1669, it is the oldest permanent opera company in Europe, and has since its inception been designed to demonstrate, as Jean-Pierre Babelon points out regarding the Louvre, "the centrality of the relationship between state power and the arts."[16] From the seventeenth century onwards, opera was the dominant musical form in Paris, and as such, was by far the most visible method of attracting attention to the glories of French music. In 1875, the new Palais Garnier became the home of the Opéra (see Fig. 1-1), putting a tangible and opulent public face on French music, designed to equal the glory of the works contained within—something that no other musical institution in France could hope to match. It is no surprise that the edifice and entry to the Opéra are adorned with representations of

[15] David Carrier, "Remembering the Past: Art Museums as Memory Theaters," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 61 (2003), 61. See also Rosalind Krauss's comment that in a traditional museum "One proceeds…from space to space along a processional path that ties each of these spaces together, a sort of narrative trajectory with each room the place of a separate chapter, but all of them articulating the unfolding of the master plot." Rosalind E. Krauss, "Postmodernism's Museum without Walls," in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, ed. Resa Greenberg, Bruce W. Reguson, and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), 343.

[16] Jean-Pierre Bablon, "The Louvre," in *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, vol. 3: "Symbols," ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, under the direction of Pierre Nora (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 254.

composers of the past, for the building itself became in part a museum dedicated to their music.[17] That Paris maintained not only the Opéra but also several other state-sponsored musical theaters only emphasizes this point. Second only to the Opéra in terms of cultural caché, the Opéra-Comique during the *fin de siècle* became more experimental in its offerings than its more conservative counterpart, and premiered a number of new works by French composers and, importantly, the theater provided a stage on which to test the viability of producing earlier operas. In fact, in a multi-author series of articles in *Le Figaro* largely devoted to analyzing the place of the Opéra-Comique in French society, the composer Gabriel Pierné echoed the same call for an Operatic Museum heard decades earlier: "The Opéra-Comique must be a sort of museum for the lyric repertoire, as the Comédie-Française is for the dramatic repertoire; it would even be fitting to augment it by drawing more than we have done on the works of Lully, Rameau, Gluck, Mozart, Méhul, and Grétry."[18]

In his early biography of Saint-Saëns, Lucien Augé de Lassus neatly summarized opera's position in French society:

> The French…completely like music only when it is allied with words. They seek, they demand of this music a drama or a comedy to accompany it, and scenery to frame it. This is no dream of some supreme ideal; it is the way things are. Hence, the obsession with the theater haunts every one

[17] For a detailed and insightful contemporary look at the structure of the Palais Garnier, see Charles Nuitter, *Le Nouvel Opéra* (Paris: Hachette, 1875). A more modern examination of the importance of the Opéra during this time may be found in Frederique Patureau, *Le Palais Garnier dans la société parisienne, 1875–1914* (Liège: Mardaga, 1991).

[18] *Le Figaro*, 1 February 1898. "L'Opéra-Comique devrait être une sorte de musée du répertoire lyrique, comme la Comédie-Française l'est du répertoire dramatique ; il serait même convenable de l'augmenter en puisant plus qu'on ne l'a fait dans les œuvres de Lulli, Rameau, Gluck, Mozart, Méhul, Grétry." These articles in *Le Figaro* and the role of the Opéra-Comique in *fin-de-siècle* Paris are analyzed in detail in Philippe Blay, "'Un théâtre français, tout à fait français,' ou un débat fin-de-siècle sur l'Opéra-Comique," *Revue de musicologie* 87 (2001): 104–44. See also my discussion of the Opéra-Comique in preserving eighteenth-century repertoire in Chapter 5.

> of us who thinks and lives amidst the song of notes and sounds. Material profit, resounding glory, popularity: for us, these do not recompense the labors of the musician-composer except when in league with the theater.[19]

While this passage refers to the plight of living composers in search of fame, it holds no less true for composers from an earlier time. In order for composers to reach the highest levels of achievement in the public consciousness—for them to achieve "resounding glory," in other words—they had to succeed at the opera houses. The cultural capital of composers, regardless of the century of their birth, was tied up in their ability to produce dramatically compelling theatrical works.

Certainly, the operas of contemporary composers were exploited for this purpose during the Third Republic. Important works by Saint-Saëns, Massenet, Debussy and others received their premières during the time period between 1875 and 1914, and were exported to other nations as evidence of French musical achievements.[20] As important as it may have been to demonstrate France's dominance in "modern" music, it was equally critical to establish a national pedigree for that music; the narrative of music history had to be revised so as to best present to the public evidence of French music's illustrious past. The presentation of the works of the past, in the format of an Operatic Museum, was a key effort to this end. As Sherman tells us, "History…is the plot that weaves together the museum's objects, infusing them with meaning, constituting them as representations;

[19] Lucien Augé de Lassus, *Saint-Saëns* (Paris: Delgrave, 1914), 132. Quoted (in English) in Lacombe, *The Keys to French Opera*, 215.

[20] For details on the extensive exportation of French opera during this time period, see Charle, "Opera in France," 252–58.

objects, with the access to the real they promise, in turn help to legitimate history's truth-claim."[21]

**Fig. 1.1: "Paris: Inauguration of the Opéra, 1875" (ca. 1900). Library of Congress.**

[21] Daniel J. Sherman, "Objects of Memory: History and Narrative in French War Museums," *French Historical Studies* 19 (1995), 52–53.

It might appear that the large-scale opera productions appealed only to the artistic and social elites of Paris. In contrast to the majority of art museums in France, admission to operas was quite expensive: in the 1880s a subscription to one of the boxes at the Opéra might cost up to 25,000 francs per year, and individual seats could be 16 or 20 francs—at a time when 90 percent of the population of France earned below 2,500 francs per year.[22] Even seats at the Opéra-Comique, less expensive and more populist than the Opéra, were beyond the finances of much of the Parisian population. And yet despite these limitations on the audiences, the effects of major operatic productions were far reaching. As Jann Pasler has pointed out, excerpts from successful works at the Opéra were often performed in more public locations like the Bon Marché department store, and the sheet-music industry allowed the wide dissemination of success operas (both old and new) in transcriptions.[23] Cultivating an interest in the works produced at the Opéra and Opéra-Comique thus allowed the middle class to emulate the cultural elites who were able to afford attending the full performances, and to help shape Parisian musical taste. Included in this interest were the revivals of the masterpieces that filled the Operatic Museum.[24]

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[22] These opera ticket prices are taken from Weber, *France, Fin de Siècle*, 167; the statistic of French population income is taken from Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2. For an examination of the social makeup of opera audiences in the decades leading up to the *fin de siècle*, see Steven Huebner, "Opera Audiences in Paris, 1830–1870," *Music & Letters* 70 (1989): 206–25.

[23] Jann Pasler, "Material Culture and Postmodern Positivism: Rethinking the 'Popular' in Late Nineteenth-Century French Music," in *Writing Through Music: Essays on Music, Culture, and Politics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 417–49.

[24] One might also point out that although many of the French museums were financially more accessible to the working classes, they were not more accessible culturally, and in the end most museum attendees were (and are) members of the upper classes regardless of the cost of attendance. See Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, with Dominique Schnapper, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Public*, trans. Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

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Given the need for an Operatic Museum, what objects for display should be chosen to uphold claims to French operatic greatness? Tracing a path through the nineteenth century proved simple enough; the first season at the Palais Garnier included revivals of perennial favorites such as Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* (1829) and Halévy's *La Juive* (1835) as well as the more recent *Hamlet* (1868), by Thomas, and Gounod's *Faust* (1859). The following year the Opéra's managers added Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète* (1849) and *Robert le diable* (1831).[25] While these works (among others) serve to demonstrate the accomplishments of the nineteenth century, tracing the line back farther became more problematic. Putting on works that audiences would be unable to tolerate, or unable to recognize as dramatic, was a tactic bound to backfire. This is why, for example, Adam de la Halle's *Jeu de Robin et de Marion*, while occupying a historically critical place in *fin-de-siècle* Paris as (in the words of Fétis) the "oldest *opéra-comique* in existence," never appeared on the larger operatic stages. Despite what would seem a golden opportunity to showcase French contributions to music history by putting on display "a tonal (and therefore, by definition, "expressive"), lyrical people's opera written in France by a Frenchman a heart-warming three centuries before Monteverdi," the *Jeu* was, it would seem, wrong for revival at the major theaters, despite its historical importance.[26] More surprisingly, the operas of Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687)—the court composer of Louis XIV and the musical equivalent of Molière—were largely absent from this Operatic Museum, and only short excerpts of his operas appeared on concert series.

[25] Specifics of the Opéra's programming may be found in Charles Dupêchez, *Histoire de l'Opéra de Paris: Un siècle au Palais Garnier* (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1984).

[26] Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past*, 168. Ellis's discussion and contextualization of the importance of the *Jeu de Robin et de Marion* is found on pages 164–70.

Despite the fact that the years after the 1870 saw the nationalistic publication of a number of volumes of Old French stage music, these works were simply too far removed from the audiences' expectations of dramatic music. As Ellis tells us, "culture is not the same as practice, and heightened symbolic value does not necessarily make a repertory acceptable for professional or other public use."[27]

In this newly revised history of French opera, only works from the second half of the eighteenth century—the so-called "classical" period—seemed sufficiently familiar to the audiences' sonic horizons of expectations that they could be successfully produced in *fin-de-siècle* Paris. It is no surprise, then, that as the earliest possible exhibit in the Operatic Museum eighteenth-century opera became a point of focus in the construction and maintenance of narratives of French musical history. In this study, I focus on the cultural importance and reception of the same key figures invoked by Theuriet's Grand'tante: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791), Christoph Willibald Ritter von Gluck (1714–1787), and Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764). After 1870, these composers assumed important cultural and historical roles, and operas by each of the three was produced at the Opéra or Opéra-Comique during the period from 1875–1914. Critical and popular attitudes towards these three figures and their operas helped shape the nationalist discourse of music history that dominated *fin-de-siècle* French culture.

The rise of French musicology and the explosion of music criticism in the decades around the turn of the century was another major factor in turning eighteenth-century opera into a *lieu de mémoire*. It is no surprise, for example, that a number of biographies of Mozart, Gluck, and Rameau appeared in the French presses during the years under consideration, or that 1872 saw the first appointment of a tutor in music history at the

[27] Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past*, 120.

Paris Conservatoire (Auguste Barbereau).[28] As Bourdieu reminds us, "the discourse of celebration, notably the biography, also plays a determining role [in the creation of symbolic value]…the biography establishes the artist as a memorable character, worthy of historical account, much like statesmen and poets."[29] Thus, analyzing the actual productions at the Opéra and Opéra-Comique and their immediate reception form only a part of my study; the musicological and critical literature surrounding each of the three composers also plays a critical role in establishing their importance in music-historical narratives. To quote Bourdieu once more:

> it becomes clear that the "subject" of the production of the art-work—of its value but also of its meaning—is not the producer who actually creates the object in its materiality, but rather the entire set of agents engaged in the field. Among these are the producers of works classified as artistic…, critics of all persuasions…, collectors, middlemen, curators, etc., in short, all who have ties with art, who live for art, and, to varying degrees, from it, and who confront each other in struggles where the imposition of not only a world view but also a vision of the artworld is at stake, and who, through these struggles, participate in the production of the value of the artist and of art.[30]

It is no surprise, given the large number of people working to place eighteenth-century opera into the Operatic Museum, that disagreements arose regarding precisely how to represent these works and their creators. Everyone (or nearly everyone) could agree that Mozart, Gluck, and Rameau were critical figures in the heritage of French opera, but precisely how and why they played such important roles was hotly contested

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[28] Katharine Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France:* La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris, *1834–1880* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 59.

[29] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic," trans. Charles Newman, in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 260.

[30] Bourdieu, "The Historical Genesis," 261.

ground at the *fin de siècle*. Examining these issues reveals a great deal about musical culture of turn-of-the-century Paris. More generally, it provides a case study for the ways in which the rewriting of music history can serve an important function in the creation of nationalist master narratives.

Before turning to the turn-of-the-century reception of the individual composers, I will provide a brief overview of each composer's changing fortunes in France during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century. Doing so places their later reception into a broader context, and allows us to see the important shifts in how French audiences perceived these "Classical" figures.

**Classical Opera in Paris Before 1875**

The eighteenth century never entirely left the opera houses of Paris. By the beginning of the 1800s, a canon consisting largely of works by André Grétry, Gluck, and Antonio Sacchini was beginning to form: a collection of operas by eighteenth-century French masters, most of which had been premièred at the Opéra, began to appear alongside newer works. All the major nineteenth-century institutions of music theater in Paris, in fact, split their repertoires between newer and "classic" works. Three main theatres performed the works of Mozart and Gluck in the nineteenth century (none performed Rameau): the Opéra, the Théâtre-Italien, and the Théâtre-Lyrique. As I discuss later in this chapter, increasingly as the century went on each of these institutions served to some extent as a musical "museum," preserving great masterworks of the past.[31] Certainly this was the situation at the Opéra at the turn of the nineteenth century: founded in 1669 as

[31] For more on the development of the musical "museum" concept, see Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

the Académie royale de musique, the Opéra was the apex of French musical culture throughout the eighteenth century, and retained these works—mostly notably those of Gluck and Grétry—in its repertory long after their creation largely in order to capitalize on its past glories by continuing to perform great successes from its history.

Until well into the nineteenth century, the Opéra's most significant competition was the Opéra-Comique (founded in 1801)—which also performed a mix of "classic" and newer works—but the two theatres had little to no overlap in repertoire due to the regulations regarding genre and institution. Works that were completely musical in nature (that is, no spoken dialogue), and with "exalted subject material and elevated musical aspirations," such as the *tragédies lyriques* of Gluck, were restricted to the Opéra, while *opéras comiques*, containing dialogue and with "lower aesthetic pretensions," were performed, as one name indicates, at the Opéra-Comique.[32] Despite the fact that for much of the century the latter theatre was actually more renowned for its performances of music by up-and-coming French composers, the Opéra remained the pinnacle of upper-class Parisian venues.[33]

Beginning under the auspices of Napoléon I, who was a strong supporter of the Italian style of opera, though, the Théâtre-Italien began to rival the Opéra in terms of the social cachet attached to attending productions. During the theater's life, it performed both new and older operas in Italian, but after the first decades of nineteenth century its eighteenth-century repertoire that was largely limited to the operas of Mozart. Most of its fame derived from the influx of Italian composers during the particularly cosmopolitan

[32] Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 8-9.

[33] For more information on the makeup of nineteenth century Opéra audiences, see Steven Huebner, "Opera audiences in Paris."

period from the 1820s to the 1840s: mainly Rossini, but also Bellini and Donizetti. Like the Théâtre-Italien, the Théâtre-Lyrique also revived "classic" operas during its twenty-year lifespan beginning in 1851, as well as producing the music of younger French composers (notably Gounod), largely thanks to its ambitious director, Léon Carvalho. This theatre was largely responsible for Gluck's return to the public eye in the late 1850s, and contributed to the Mozart craze of the 1860s.

Each of the three figures, Mozart, Gluck, and Rameau, had a remarkably different reception history during the nineteenth century, and I turn now to a brief examination of the rhetoric and performance histories that surrounded the composers before the final decades of the nineteenth century.[34] Mozart, a native German, was initially resisted but eventually became known as one of the most celebrated operatic composers of the century, with *Don Giovanni* becoming the "masterwork of masterworks"; Gluck, the adopted Frenchman, enjoyed popularity at the turn of the century and was only sporadically revived thereafter; Rameau, perhaps the most celebrated French composer of the *ancien régime*, fell into an almost total neglect in the great opera houses. A closer look at each of the three will set the stage for examining in more detail the ideologies behind the history of their reception and may explain how and why their treatment changed after 1870.

[34] For a further overview of the major theatres in nineteenth-century Paris, see Alicia Levin, "Musical Theaters in Paris, 1830–1900: A Documentary Overview," in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) : 379–402; and Nicole Wild, *Dictionnaire des théâtres parisiens au XIXe siècle: les théâtres et la musique* **(**Paris: Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1989). More detailed information about the specific major theatres in this time period may be found in the following: Opéra and Opéra-Comique: Patrick Barbier, "Opera in Paris, 1800-1850: A Lively History," trans. Robert Luoma (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1995); Théâtre Italien: Janet Lynn Johnson, "The Théâtre italien and opera and theatrical life in restoration Paris, 1818–1827," 3 Vols. (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1988); Théâtre Lyrique: T.J. Walsh, *Second Empire Opera: The Théâtre Lyrique, Paris, 1851–1870* (New York: Riverrun Press, 1981).

*Mozart*

Alone among eighteenth-century composers, Mozart's operas enjoyed a place on the Parisian stage throughout the nineteenth century. Unlike Haydn or other "Classical" figures, Mozart's fame rested almost entirely on his dramatic works.[35] Yet despite the prominence they would later achieve, the early French reception of Mozart's operas was not particularly auspicious. Most of the composer's mature operas appeared there in the first decades of the century, but in an effort to make the operas more palatable to audiences accustomed to French works, early attempts to import these works were marked by significant alterations to the libretto, the music, or both.[36] The first such attempt occurred in 1793, when a version of *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786) was produced at the Opéra. Given that the source of Lorenzo da Ponte's libretto was Beaumarchais's popular play *Le Mariage de Figaro* (1778), this opera seemed a logical choice for the purpose of preparing Mozart's path into the French capital. In order to make this connection as clear as possible (and avoid "unfortunate" alteration to Beaumarchais's universally-known text), for the purpose of this production the recitatives were removed and replaced by the entire spoken text of *Le Mariage de Figaro*, in addition to the

[35] Katharine Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France:* La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris, *1834-80* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 89.

[36] Such changes were typical and were expected of any updated or imported operatic works through most of the nineteenth century. One example analogous to the alterations to Mozart's operas is the French reception of Weber's *Der Freischütz*, which was heavily altered and re-titled *Robin des Bois* in Paris. A discussion of the origins and circumstances surround this version may be found in Annegret Fauser, "Phantasmagorie im deutschen Wald? Zur 'Freischütz'-Rezeption in London und Paris 1824," in *Deutsche Meister-böse Geister? Nationale Selbstfindung in der Musik*, ed. Hermann Danuser and Herfried Münkler (Schleigen: Argus, 2001): 245–73.

standard translation of the arias into French and a host of other changes.[37] The end result was an unsuccessful hybrid. For one thing, the singers of the Opéra were untrained in the arts of spoken theatre and thus failed to do justice to Beaumarchais. Furthermore, many audience members found it to be overly lengthy; one critic observed in the *Journal de Paris* that "the work has been found excessively long, and…in the final acts the most beautiful pieces of music no longer produced any effect."[38] Despite these apparent limitations, the production exposed Parisian audiences to Mozart's operatic works in French, and set the standard for the types of alterations to his music that would continue over the next decades.

Perhaps the most extensive revisions to a Mozart opera were made in 1801, when a version of *Die Zauberflöte* (1791) entitled *Les Mystères d'Isis* was produced at the Opéra.[39] The plot of this opera retained only a distant kinship to that of Mozart's, instead opting to expand on the Egyptian aspects of the libretto in order to respond to an early nineteenth-century craze for all things from that country.[40] The music included along with much of Mozart's original music a veritable potpourri of selections from his other operas as well as works by Haydn.[41] Despite—or perhaps because of—these significant

[37] For a thorough discussion of the alterations to Mozart's score that took place in early Parisian performances of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, see Sherwood Dudley, "Les Premières versions françaises du *Mariage de Figaro* de Mozart," *Revue de musicologie* 69 (1983): 55–83.

[38] *Journal de Paris*, 22 March 1793. "…la pièce a été trouvée excessivement longue, et…dans les derniers actes les plus beaux morceaux de musique ne produisoient plus d'effet." Reprinted in Belinda Cannone, *La Réception des opéras de Mozart dans la presse parisienne (1793–1829)* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1991), 145.

[39] For a detailed look at this production, see Rudolph Angermüller, "*Les mystères d'Isis* (1801) und *Don Juan* (1805, 1834) auf der Bühne der Pariser Oper," *Mozart-Jahrbuch* (1980–83): 32–97.

[40] For a plot summary of *Les mystères*, see Cannone, *La Réception des opéras de Mozart*, 56-58. See also Jean Mongrédien, "*Les Mystères d'Isis* (1801) and Reflections on Mozart from the Parisian Press at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century," in *Music in the Classic Period: Essays in Honor of Barry S. Brook*, ed. Allan W. Atlas (New York: Pendragon Press, 1985), 202.

changes, *Les Mystères* was quite successful, and continued to be performed (although later cut in length somewhat) until its final performance in 1827. "And frankly," wrote the critic Adolphe Jullien, "it wasn't too soon."[42] By that time, Mozart's operas were becoming canonic works, and audiences were becoming more and more interested in hearing them in something closer to their original form. However, even if in hindsight *Les Mystères* seemed an unfortunate error in taste, the work nonetheless helped establish Mozart's reputation in Paris.

The final Mozart première at the Opéra during the first decade of the nineteenth century was *Don Juan* in 1805.[43] As one might expect given the treatment we have already seen of Mozart's operas at the Opéra, this version was quite different from the *Don Giovanni* audiences had seen in Prague or Vienna.[44] The identities and personalities of the main characters were freely altered, and the music was "arranged" (quite drastically) by the pianist Frédéric Kalkbrenner. Jullien again provides some witty commentary on this production: "A single piece was left in its place—a single one—and that was the overture."[45] Critics responded in by now familiar ways to *Don Juan*, with some praising the production as a masterpiece and others complaining of "too much

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[41] Barbier, *Opera in Paris*, 67.

[42] Jullien, *Paris dilettante*, 124. "…et franchement, ce n'était pas trop tôt."

[43] Jean Mongrédien has demonstrated the existence of a French published version of the overture to *Don Giovanni* dating from 1795, but there is no evidence regarding its public performance. Jean Mongrédien, *French Music from the Enlightenment to Romanticism, 1789–1830*, trans. Sylvain Frémaux (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1996), 324.

[44] For specifics of the differences in the two libretti, see Angermüller, "*Les Mystères d'Isis.*"

[45] Adolphe Jullien, *Paris dilettante au commencement du siècle* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1884), 131. "Un seul morceau était resté en sa place, un seul, et ce morceau, c'était l'ouverture."

music" and disparaging the work as too German for French audiences.[46] *Don Juan* seems to have met with some success at the Opéra, but it was not until several decades after this initial performance that the work began to hold the position it was to achieve later in the century, as we will see.

Beginning in 1807, audiences began to have a chance to hear Mozart's operas in versions a bit closer to the originals, when *Le Nozze di Figaro* appeared at the Théâtre Italien. This production, while still containing a number of significant alterations to the opera's original score and libretto, was nonetheless the closest to the "authentic" version that one could hear in nineteenth-century Paris. The same is true of the theater's productions of *Così fan tutte* (1809), *Don Giovanni* (1811), and *La clemenza di Tito* (1816). None of these productions attained much success, though some critics were certainly favorable; during the first decades of the century Parisian audiences preferred the more characteristically French versions being produced at the Opéra. Critics were mixed regarding the 1807 *Figaro*. The critic Salgues, after praising the work highly in the *Courrier de l'Europe et des spectacles*, asked "How did this same work, put on some years ago at the Opéra, have so little success?"[47] At the same time, another critic wrote with a more nationalistic tone in the *Journal de l'Empire*, complaining that numerous *opéras comiques* by Grétry, Sacchini's *La Colonie*, Piccini's *La Bonne Fille*, and even

[46] *Journal de l'Empire*, 19–20 September 1805. One of the more damning passages—penned by Julien-Louis Geoffroy—is: "Il y a trop de musique dans *Don Juan*; c'est un festin ou l'extrême abondance rassasie promptement: les morceaux d'ensemble sont tellement multipliés, ils sont se pleins et si forts, que les auditeurs se trouvent pour ainsi dire *écrasés* sous le poids de l'harmonie…Les Allemands ont un plus grand appétit et un estomac plus robuste que les Français; ils sont insatiables de musique et d'harmonie…L'enthousiasme des Allemands pour le *Don Juan* de Mozart n'étoit donc pas un sûr garant qu'il devoit produire en France.

[47] *Courrier de l'Europe et des spectacles*, 25 December 1807. Reprinted in Cannone, *La réception des opéras de Mozart*, 274. "…comment ce même ouvrage, donné il y a quelques années à l'Opéra, a obtenu si peu de succès ?"

several of the comic operas put on at the théâtre de l'Impératrice [i.e. at the Théâtre Italien] are superior to Mozart's *Figaro*, but the disciples of the German school won't even allow the comparison…."[48]

Any controversy in the press aside, Adolphe Jullien could write in the 1880s that the 1807 *Figaro* "definitively established the great composer's reputation in Paris."[49] While this may be something of an overstatement, it is clear from the reviews of the Théâtre-Italien's production of *Così fan tutte* (1790) in 1809 that Mozart's status as a composer was continuing to rise during the first decade of the nineteenth century. One reviewer for the *Journal de l'Empire* wrote that "everything that Mozart wrote is sure to please in Paris: he's the fashionable musician now…," and Salgues, writing again in the *Courrier de l'Europe et des spectacles*, opined that "when one names Mozart, one immediately has the idea of everything that's the most perfect in music," indicating a fairly widespread knowledge and admiration of the composer's works.[50]

*Don Giovanni* reached the Théâtre-Italien in 1811, where it was directed by no less a figure than Spontini. The performance was a combination of the Prague and Vienna versions of Mozart's work, but nonetheless remained far closer to the original libretto than did the Opéra's 1805 production.[51] Despite this new version, critics still remained

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[48] *Journal de l'Empire*, 27 January 1808. Reprinted in Cannone, *La réception des opéras de Mozart*, 271. "Un grand nombre d'opéras comiques de Grétry, *la Colonie* de Sacchini, *la Bonne Fille* de Piccini, plusieurs même des opéras bouffons joués sur le théâtre de l'Impératrice, sont supérieurs au *Figaro* de Mozart; mais les disciples de l'école allemande n'admettent pas même de comparaison…."

[49] Jullien, *Paris dilettante*, 107. "Cette représentation des *Nozze* à l'Opéra-Italien établit définitivement chez nous la réputation du grand musicien."

[50] *Journal de l'Empire*, 27 January 1809. Reprinted in Cannone, *La Réception des opéras de Mozart*, 291. "Tout ce qu'a fait Mozart est sûr de plaire à Paris: c'est le musicien à la mode…."; *Courrier de l'Europe et des spectacles*, 3 February 1809. Reprinted in Cannone, *La Réception des opéras de Mozart*, 296. "Quant on nomme Mozart, on a aussitôt l'idée de tout ce que la musique a de plus parfait."

generally skeptical of the work. The conservative Julien-Louis Geoffroy, for one, was openly hostile to the production:

> It has been several years since *Don Juan*, translated into French, was produced at the Opéra; despite the vogue for Mozart, the effect was mediocre: the masterwork was admired while producing yawns, and quickly abandoned. Enthusiasts didn't fail to place all the blame onto the performance; they claimed that Mozart had been massacred; they cried sacrilege. Here is the same *Don Juan* put on in Italian at the Opéra-Buffa [Théâtre-Italien] by an excellent troupe; and boredom, the faithful companion of this masterwork, still insists on following all the way to the theatre where it ought to receive the most spectacular justice.[52]

Less vitriolic reviewers found merit in the opera's music, at least, though the libretto was largely maligned—the reviewer in the *Journal de Paris* reported that "this opera's libretto is, like the majority of Italian productions in this genre, a network of bizarre actions that strain credibility: it is [Molière's] *Festin de Pierre*, not translated, but travestied."[53] Despite their lack of critical success—particularly in comparison with the works of Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini that the theater was to see in the following decade—*Le*

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[51] Pauline Girard, "*Don Giovanni* au Théâtre-Italien, 1811–1877," in *Don Juan* [Exhibition Catalogue, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 25 April - 5 July 1991] (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1991), 193.

[52] *Journal de l'Empire*, 15 October 1811. "Il y a plusieurs années que ce Don Juan, traduit en Français, fut joué au grand Opéra ; malgré la vogue de Mozart, l'effet fut médiocre : le chef-d'œuvre fut admiré en bâillant, et bientôt abandonné. Les enthousiastes ne manquèrent pas de rejeter toute la faute sur l'exécution ; ils prétendirent qu'on avoit massacré Mozart ; ils crièrent au sacrilège. Voici le même Don Juan représenté en italien à l'Opéra-Buffa [Théâtre-Italien] par une troupe excellente ; et l'ennui, fidèle compagnon de ce chef-d'oeuvre, s'obstine encore à le suivre jusque sur le théâtre où l'on devoit lui rendre la plus éclatante justice." Reprinted in Cannone, *La Réception des opéras de Mozart*, 306. For more on Geoffroy's views of Mozart, see Katharine Ellis, "A Dilettante at the Opera: Issues in the Criticism of Julien-Louis Geoffroy, 1800–1814," in *Reading Critics Reading: Opera and Ballet Criticism in France from the Revolution to 1848*, ed. Roger Parker and Mary Ann Smart (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 46–68.

[53] *Journal de Paris*, 13 October 1811. "Le poème de cet opéra est, comme la plupart des productions italiennes de ce genre, un tissu d'invraisemblances bizarres : c'est le *Festin de Pierre*, non pas traduit, mais travesti." Reprinted in Cannone, *La Réception des opéras de Mozart*, 309.

*nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* remained in the company's repertory until the theater disbanded in the 1870s.

To the list of Mozart operas performed at the Opéra and the Théâtre-Italien, one may add a few performances of Mozart operas given at the Théâtre-Royal de l'Odéon, which performed musical theater in the period from 1824 to 1828. In 1825, the Odéon put on a pasticcio of Mozart's operas, entitled *Louis XII, ou La Route de Reims*, which contained music drawn from *La clemenza di Tito*, *Idomeneo*, and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*—in short, from the operas which had received comparatively little exposure in Paris (although *Die Entführung* was produced in Paris in 1802 by a German troupe).[54] *Les Noces de Figaro* followed in 1826, and was "surprisingly successful" during the hot summer months of that year; *Don Juan* was staged in 1827, only a few months before the Odéon's opera troupe disbanded. Both operas were given in translations by Henri-Joseph Blaze (*dit* Castil-Blaze), a figure whose importance to French music criticism during this time period can hardly be overstated.

After the first few decades of the nineteenth century, Mozart's reception history in Paris would become largely synonymous with that of *Don Juan*, which developed over the following decades from being a reasonably successful opera with "too much music" to being the "masterwork of masterworks"; by 1846, Gustave Flaubert could write that the "three most beautiful things God has made are the sea, *Hamlet*, and Mozart's *Don Juan*."[55] Through the rest of the century, it remained by far Mozart's most popular opera

[54] Mark Everist, *Music Drama at the Paris Odéon, 1824–1828* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 160. For a plot summary of the fascinating *pasticcio*, see pp. 159–60.

[55] Letter to Louise Colet, 3 October 1846. Quoted in Girard, "*Don Giovanni* au Théâtre-Italien," 197. "Les trois plus belles choses que Dieu a faites, c'est la mer, l'*Hamlet* et le *Don Juan* de Mozart."

in Paris, as it was in the rest of Europe, as well. The first significant step down this path was likely the 1820 production of the opera at the Théâtre-Italien, which garnered a level of success that had evaded previous productions of Mozart's works.[56] The tenor Manuel Garcia performed the role of the Don (originally written for a baritone voice), to great critical acclaim; for example, the influential critic and author François-Joseph Fétis wrote in the *Revue musicale* that "Garcia shaped the title role in a way that will remain for a long time in the memories of the musicians as the example of perfection."[57] After this immense success, *Don Giovanni* was produced nearly every year at the Théâtre-Italien, always in the same 1820 version, and for several decades the theater remained the best place to hear the opera in Paris.

Putting aside the largely unremarkable 1827 production at the Odéon, the Théâtre-Italien held a monopoly on *Don Giovanni* until 1834, when the work appeared at the Opéra (again as *Don Juan*) after an absence of nearly thirty years. In contrast with the ongoing popularity of the opera at the Théâtre-Italien, however, the Opéra's production was, in Katharine Ellis's words, "a commercial and artistic failure of immense cultural significance."[58] The libretto, which further modified Castil-Blaze's 1820s adaptation, emphasized interpretations of the principal characters taken from the writings of E.T.A. Hoffmann and Alfred de Musset, whose works on the subject of Don Juan proved

[56] Girard, "*Don Giovanni* au Théâtre-Italien," 194.

[57] *Revue musicale* 2 (1828), 151. Quoted in Girard, "*Don Giovanni* au Théâtre-Italien," 194. "Garcia donna au rôle principal une physionomie dont le souvenir restera longtemps dans la mémoire des musiciens comme le type de la perfection."

[58] Katharine Ellis, "Rewriting 'Don Giovanni,' or 'The Thieving Magpies,'" *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 119 (1994), 213.

influential throughout Europe.[59] Perhaps surprisingly, this version of the libretto met with general approval. The alterations to the score, however, did not fare as well. The lead role was given to the famous tenor Adolphe Nourrit, necessitating the transposition of much of the opera, and several scenes were added to the score, including the use of music from *Idomeneo* and the "Dies Irae" from the *Requiem* in the rewritten *scena ultima*.[60] The opera's constant repetition at the Théâtre-Italien over the decade and a half leading up to the 1834 version seems to have cemented a particular version—one fairly close to Mozart's own—of the score to *Don Giovanni* in the minds of Parisian opera-goers (who conveniently forgot that Garcia, also a tenor, had sung the role in 1820). Given the canonic status that the opera had achieved in Paris during the preceding years, deviations from this standard presentation of Mozart's music met with general outrage at the lack of "authenticity" that one could find at the Théâtre-Italien. The Opéra tried again to revive the opera in 1841, when the baritone Barroilhet took the title role—the first time that the part was sung in the origincal range at the Opéra.[61] Following this revival, however, the Opéra let *Don Juan* rest until 1866, a significant date in the history of Mozart's opera in Paris.

In the 1850s, though, a new theater emerged in Paris, and one where Mozart's works played a significant role. The newly-opened Théâtre-Lyrique produced several of Mozart's operas during its two-decade lifespan. In 1858, the director Léon Carvalho put on *Les Noces de Figaro* (in French), which finally met with some degree of success in

[59] For an analysis of the changes to the opera's characters as well as a fascinating look at the critical reception of the production, see Ellis, "Rewriting 'Don Giovanni.'"

[60] Ellis, "Rewriting 'Don Giovanni,'" 232.

[61] Martine Kahane, "Don Juan à l'Opéra," in *Don Juan* [Exhibition Catalogue, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 25 April - 5 July 1991] (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1991), 212.

Paris outside the Théâtre-Italien.[62] In 1865 a production of *Die Zauberflöte* followed in a version entitled *La Flûte enchantée*, which was significantly closer to Mozart's original than *Les Mystères d'Isis*, and which also proved to be an enormous success for the theatre.[63] These productions did much to popularize these non-*Don Juan* operas in Paris, mostly by walking a careful line between adapting them to French tastes while not going to the excesses seen earlier in the century, thus avoiding alienating either purists or more general audiences.

These productions aside, however, *Don Giovanni* maintained its prominence as Mozart's chief masterwork, a position that culminated in 1866, when the opera was produced more-or-less simultaneously in the three main operatic venues that traditionally performed Mozart's operas: the Opéra, the Théâtre-Italien, and the Théâtre-Lyrique—an event that Jullien referred to in retrospect as the "grand tournoi musical."[64] For the first time, the Opéra came out on top of its perennial quarrel with the Théâtre-Italien, largely due to the near-unanimous public acclaim of Jean-Baptiste Faure, who played the title character at the Opéra, a role he continued to perform with great success for more than a decade. As Pauline Girard points out, Manuel Garcia ceased to be the "Don Juan de référence," and the Opéra began to be perceived as having the definitive production of *Don Juan*.[65] In fact, for some critics the real struggle seems to have been between the two French-langauge productions (at the Opéra and the Théâtre-Lyrique), in which the victory seems to have been divided, at least according to Gustave Bertrand, the critic at *Le*

[62] Walsh, *Second Empire Opera*, 91.

[63] Walsh, *Second Empire Opera*, 191.

[64] Jullien, *Paris dilettante*, 138.

[65] Girard, "Don Giovanni au Théâtre-Italien," 197.

*Ménestrel*: "Since it's a battle, since it's a duel, who holds the advantage? If all's well that ends well, the Opéra wins with the admirable final scene. But for the entire first half of the evening—and even after—general agreement accords the victory to the Théâtre-Lyrique."[66] Bertrand does go on, however, to praise Faure highly, "who sings *Don Juan* like no one else, who takes the role with authority, distinction, and elegance…,"[67] further emphasizing the dominance the singer was beginning to hold on popular conceptions of *Don Giovanni*—both the role and the opera—an association between singer and role that would last until nearly the turn of the twentieth century.

Though they were not the last revivals of Mozart operas before 1875, the 1866 productions of *Don Giovanni* are a fitting end to the overview of the composer's early nineteenth-century reception in Paris. After the slow beginnings around the turn of the century, Mozart began a meteoric rise in popularity in the 1820s that receded only in the final decades of the century. One of the major factors that supported the rise of *Don Giovanni* and its composer in French consciousness in the nineteenth century was the perception of the opera as being somehow "Romantic" in sentiment. Certainly the widespread French popularity of E.T.A. Hoffmann's writings about the opera helped fuel the blaze of interest in the work, and closer to home the writings of Fétis in the *Revue*

[66] *Le Ménestrel*, 13 May 1866. "Puisque c'est une lutte, puisque c'est un duel, à qui est resté l'avantage? Si tout est bien qui finit bien, c'est l'Opéra qui la emporté avec l'admirable scène finale ; mais pendant tout la première moitié de la soirée, et même au-delà, on s'accordait généralement à donner la victoire au Théâtre-Lyrique."

[67] *Le Ménestrel*, 13 May 1866. "Faure, qui chant *Don Juan* comme personne, qui tient le rôle avec autorité, distinction, élégance"

**Fig. 1-2: Eugène Lacoste, *Maquette de costume pour "Don Giovanni," 1: Don Juan (Faure)*, 1876. This is an aquarelle of Faure in the role of Don Juan at the Opéra production in 1876. Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra.**

*musicale* did the same.[68] In fact, the "Romanticization" of Mozart had begun in the 1810s, with Stendhal's emphasis on Mozart's dark and brooding musical qualities in his *Lettres écrites de Vienne* (1814) and the *Vies de Haydn, de Mozart et de Métastase* (1817).[69] The fact that *Don Giovanni* was perceived as a Romantic, and thus "modern," work allowed it to escape the fate that befell most other eighteenth-century works during

[68] Hoffmann's Romantic ideas about music, and in particularly his Mozart criticism became known in France in the 1820s and 1830s, at least partially as a result of the success there of Weber's *Der Freischütz* (known in France as *Robin des Bois*). Castil-Blaze was an early proponent Hoffmann's in France, adopting many of Hoffmann's perspectives on Mozart's music. Annegret Fauser has pointed out that "*Robin des Bois* scheint 1824 in Paris eine Katalysator-Funktion angenommen und den Weg für eine Französische Rezeption der deutschen Romantik und gerade auch von E.T.A. Hoffmann geebnet zu haben, die sich langsam anzubahnen begann und erst in den 1830er Jahren gänzlich entfaltete. Castil-Blaze gehörte schon früh zu jenen französischen Intellektuellen, die Hoffmanns Werk rezipierten, und seine Hoffmann-Verehrung kam schließlich zehn Jahre später in einer anderen Bearbeitung, nämlich der von Mozarts *Don Giovanni* voll zum tragen." Fauser, "Phantasmagorie im deutschen Wald?," 268.

[69] For a more thorough discussion of Mozart's place in literary Romanticism, see Gernot Gruber, *Mozart & Posterity*, trans. R. S. Furness (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994), and particularly Chapter 2.

the following century. Not only did it become a canonic work in the sense that it was preserved and venerated for historical reasons, but its extreme popularity remained essentially unabated from 1820 to nearly the end of the century, which is more than one can say about any other eighteenth-century opera in Paris.

Mozart's nationality makes this unique position all the more surprising, particularly given that some early critics were opposed to the composer's "Germanic" musical character. By the mid-century, though, French critics at least could speak of "our *Don Juan*," suggesting that not only had the work become de-Germanized, but ownership of it had somehow been transferred, *mirabile dictu*, to France.[70] In one sense, at least, the physical incarnation of the opera did reside in Paris; in 1855 Pauline Viardot purchased the autograph manuscript of the work and brought it to France.[71] As Mark Everist has shown, Viardot became something like a priestess over a Mozart "cult," presiding over the holy relic of the autograph—complete with reliquary case—and housed in what amounts to a shrine in her Paris home.[72] The fact that such a cult emerged around not just a composer, but a specific work, highlights the unusual place that *Don Giovanni* and its composer occupied in Parisian society by the mid nineteenth century. During much of the last half of the century the cultural ubiquity of *Don Juan/Don Giovanni* led to it being conceived—at least in France—as French cultural property, if not precisely as a French

[70] Paul Bernard, for example, in his intensely negative review of the Parisian production of *Tannhäuser*, contrasts Wagner's "torpeur musicale" with "nos chefs-d'oeuvres à nous, notre *Guillame Tell*, notre *Don Juan*, notre *Lucie*, notre *Juive*, nos *Huguenots*…." The inclusion of *Don Juan* in this list would certainly suggest that the work was perceived as being somehow French cultural property. *Le Ménestrel*, 24 March 1861.

[71] Mark Everist, "Enshrining Mozart: *Don Giovanni* and the Viardot Circle," *19th-Century Music* 25 (2001–2002), 168. Interestingly, Viardot was the daughter of Manuel Garcia, whose memorable performances of the lead role in *Don Giovanni* in the 1820s may have made his daughter an even more suitable choice to be Mozart's Parisian champion.

[72] For a description of the shrine, complete with illustrations, see Everist, "Enshrining Mozart."

work. As I hope to demonstrate in Chapter 2, after 1870 it was this interpretation of Mozart and his operas that would be challenged. By this time, the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Parisian artistic life began, in Anselm Gerhard's words, a "slow decline toward a poorly disguised provincialism," eventually leading to a reevaluation of the prominence that Mozart should enjoy in Paris.[73]

**Gluck**

The early reception of Gluck's operas presents a sharp contrast to Mozart's, as a result of the fact that his status as a "French" composer had already been cemented in the eighteenth century. Though not French by birth, Gluck adapted several of his operas—most importantly *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762) and *Alceste* (1767)—for the Parisian stage (in 1774 and 1776, respectively), as well as composing major new works for Paris, including *Iphigénie en Aulide* (1774), *Armide* (1777), *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1779), and *Echo et Narcisse* (1779). Thus, Gluck had to face none of the initial resistance that plagued the reception of Mozart's operas in the early nineteenth century. On the contrary, Gluck's operas remained popular through the end of the eighteenth century and well into the 1820s, with the exception of a brief hiatus in their performance during the Terror following the Revolution.[74] Not only were the works still performed at the turn of the century, but they occupied a place of honor; Jean Mongrédien points out that in 1798, for example, the Opéra "reserved the top billing for Gluck's *tragédies lyriques* and those of

[73] Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 394.

[74] Mark Everist, "Gluck, Berlioz and Castil-Blaze: The Poetics and Reception of French Opera," in *Giacomo Meyerbeer and Music Drama in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 65.

his followers" and that as far as the répertoire at the Opéras was concerned, "it was as though French opera had begun with Gluck in the 1780s."[75]

Even before the 1820s, though, the Parisian taste for Gluck was beginning to wane, and "it would be difficult to argue that he was ever canonic in the nineteenth century."[76] For some critics, again notably Geoffroy, Gluck's German origins negatively affected his music. Writing of an 1810 performance of *Iphigénie en Aulide*, with its libretto by Racine, Geoffroy wrote that "it is likely that the German musician did not understand French well enough to be sensitive to the melody of the most harmonious of our poets"—a statement that effectively places Gluck as wholly separate from the great artists of French history (like Racine).[77] Certainly, no one denied Gluck's importance as a composer, but even many of those who accorded him a place of honor in French music history clamored for new productions on the stage. "Gluck is dead," one reviewer wrote of the 1810 revival of *Iphigénie en Aulide*, "and his music is sick."[78]

As Mark Everist has argued, Gluck's place in Paris during the first half of the nineteenth century is reflected in the critical writings of Hector Berlioz and Castil-Blaze.[79] Castil-Blaze, as we have already seen, was instrumental in the adaptation and presentation of the more up-to-date operas of Mozart in Paris; for him the composer

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[75] Mongrédien, *French Music from the Enlightenment to Romanticism*, 72.

[76] Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France*, 80.

[77] *Empire*, 16 January 1810. Quoted in Ellis, "A Dilettante at the Opera," 57. "Il est probable que le musicien allemand n'entendait pas assez bien le français pour être sensible à la mélodie du plus harmonieux de nos poètes." Above I use Ellis's translation of the French. The main focus of Geoffroy's focus on Gluck's German-ness, according to Ellis, is to enable the critic to establish Sacchini as the ultimate example of classical French opera.

[78] *Journal de l'empire*, 21 February 1811. Quoted in Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 175.

[79] Everist, "Gluck, Berlioz and Castil-Blaze."

represented artistic progression. It is no wonder that Gluck's continued dominance at the Opéra might seem to Castil-Blaze antiquated, and even retrogressive. For Castil-Blaze, who was a great admirer of Gluck's music, the eighteenth-century *tragédie lyrique* had simply lost its ability to speak to a nineteenth-century Parisian audience (through sheer overexposure if nothing else), and consequently the public was bored. See, for example, the critic's comments on the 1825 revival of *Armide* at the Opéra: "*Armide* continually contradicts the taste of the day, and the superannuated, gothic turns found on every page do not encourage music-lovers to listen without impatience."[80] Even as early as 1801, one critic could report that "now high society arrives at the Opéra only for the ballet. A fly could be heard when Vestris, Mademoiselle Clotide, or Madame Gardel dance, but the patrons cough, spit, chat, or smirk when Alcestis or Iphigenia sing."[81] To combat this operatic ennui, Castil-Blaze called for either the adaptation of Gluck for modern audiences, or the programming of newer works—Mozart, for example. Thus, the rise of Mozart's operatic star in Paris was to some extent linked to the fall of Gluck's.

While Castil-Blaze adopted a realist view of French audiences' demands, Berlioz perceived Gluck's works as the pinnacle of French operatic achievement, worthy models of emulation rather than ossified and antiquated holdovers from a previous era in opera history. Faced with criticism like Castil-Blaze's, Berlioz became the chief champion of Gluck's music in the nineteenth century. Joël-Marie Fauquet has eloquently summed up Berlioz's self-imposed role:

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[80] *Journal des débats*, 10 December 1825. Quoted in Everist, "Gluck, Berlioz and Castil-Blaze," 71. "*Armide* est dans une contradiction continuelle avec le goût du jour, et les tournures gothiques et surannées qui s'y montrent à chaque page ne disposent pas les amateurs à l'écouter sans impatience." Here I use Everist's translation of the French.

[81] *Journal des spectacles*, 4 Frimaire X (25 November 1801). Quoted in Mongrédien, *French Music from the Enlightenment to Romanticism*, 73.

> As early as 1825, and regularly thereafter, Berlioz's music criticism focused upon the name and the works of Gluck in such a way as protectively to surround them with a kind of palace guard: fearing the possible disappearance of what had so inspired him, and what he wished in his own way to transmit, Berlioz denounced the abandon into which the works of Gluck had fallen, urged that the integrity of his idol's musical texts be respected, and thus invoked a tradition of which he considered himself the primary keeper.[82]

Berlioz's entreaties fell largely on deaf ears, however, and by the 1830s Gluck's operas were nearly absent from the Parisian stages, aside from a revival of *Orphée* in 1848. During this time, though, performances of fragments of the operas appeared regularly on concert programs. At the Société des Concerts at the Paris Conservatoire, for example, hardly a concert season went by in the mid-century without some of the popular excerpts from *Orphée* or *Alceste*.[83] Distilling Gluck's dramatic works to a few choruses, one or two arias, and the Scène des Enfers, however, was not enough for Berlioz. The admiration that he felt for the older composer remained undimmed, as did his musical and critical efforts on Gluck's behalf.

Perhaps the single most important event in Gluck reception during the nineteenth century is the famous revival of *Orphée* at the Théâtre-Lyrique in 1859 (again under the direction of Léon Carvalho), for which Berlioz was largely responsible. After an 1824 revival featuring the debut of tenor Adolphe Nourrit (whom we have already seen appearing in *Don Juan*), the opera was only seldom performed after the end of the

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[82] Joël-Marie Fauquet, "Berlioz and Gluck," trans. Peter Bloom, in *The Cambridge Companion to Berlioz*, ed. Peter Bloom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 200.

[83] The complete programs for the Société des Concerts may be found online at http://hector.ucdavis.edu/SdC/. This useful repository was created by D. Kern Holoman as a companion to his book *The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, 1828-1967* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004).

1820s.[84] For the 1859 production, Berlioz rewrote the role of Orphée for Pauline Viardot, whose reputation as a singer was well established by that time, as was her status as an authority on eighteenth-century opera, as we have already seen from her association with the autograph score of *Don Giovanni*.[85] This production was very well received by Parisian critics—Berlioz's became the new standard version of the opera—and succeeded in rekindling some interest in Gluck and his works. The reviewer for *L'Univers musical*, Philippe Martin, presents a very different scene from the distracted audiences of the 1820s that sought new musical innovations:

> *Orphée*, one of Gluck's immortal masterworks, was sung before a room replete with musical and artistic illustrations, listening with a religious silence to the admirable recitatives, in which one finds tenderness, sadness, and the most exalted passion expressed with an indescribable eloquence, without noise, but simply and naturally.[86]

Léon Escudier, writing in *La France musicale*, was even more laudatory, setting the "simplicity" of Gluck's music against more complicated modern music:

> the most touching simplicity restrains the music drama. There, there is nothing disjointed, nothing false, nothing banal; it is dramatic inspiration in all its grace and all its power. It is the purity of the melodic line; it is the charm of Raphael combined with the grandeur and the energy of Corneille! Everything is divine in this eternal masterwork, clarified by the rays of immortality, and the song and orchestra. The years will pass—the

[84] Fauquet lists one performance in 1829, two in 1830-31, and an incomplete performance in 1833. Joël-Marie Fauquet, "Berlioz's Version of Gluck's *Orphée*," trans. Peter Bloom, in *Berlioz Studies*, ed. Peter Bloom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 191.

[85] Interestingly, Viardot was initially skeptical of performing the role of Orphée, citing a distaste for Gluck's operas as well as an unwillingness to perform *en travesti*. Fauquet, "Berlioz's version of Gluck's *Orphée*," 198.

[86] *L'Univers musical*, 20 November 1859. "*Orphée*, l'un des immortels chefs-d'oeuvre de Glück [*sic*], était chanté devant une salle remplie d'illustrations musicales et artistiques, écoutant avec un religieux silence ces récitatifs admirables, où la tendresse, la douleur, la passion la plus exaltée se trouvent exprimées avec une éloquence indescriptible, sans bruit, simplement, naturellement."

> centuries as well….Gluck will never pass; he will remain on his antique bronze pedestal, upright, like the gods of antiquity.[87]

Here Gluck's works have gone from being outdated to being immortal, and his artistic achievements, far from impeding the progress of music in France, are put onto the same level as the great artists of French art and literature. The Opéra, following the lead of the Théâtre-Lyrique, produced *Alceste* in 1861 (for the first time since 1826), which Berlioz also adapted for Viardot. This production, while still successful, failed to maintain the momentum established with *Orphée*, although another *Alceste* revival did occur at the Opéra in 1866. The problem with a sustained success for Gluck's operas, at least according to Fétis, rested more with nineteenth-century audiences than with the works themselves. Writing into the *Revue et Gazette musicale* in response to the 1861 *Alceste*, Fétis argued in favor of presenting Gluck's music in the from of excerpts in concert format (as in Fétis's own *Concerts historiques*) rather than onstage; modern audiences simply found Gluck's austere style boring—beautiful, but without content.[88]

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[87] *La France musicale*, 20 November 1859. "la simplicité la plus touchante enchaîne le drame musical. Là, rien de heurté, rien de faux, rien de banal; c'est l'inspiration dramatique dans toute sa grâce et dans toute sa puissance; c'est la pureté de la ligne mélodique; c'est le charme de Raphaël, uni à la grandeur et à l'énergie de Corneille! Tout est divin dans cet éternel chef-d'oeuvre, éclairé des rayons de l'immortalité, et le chant et l'orchestre. Les années passeront, les siècles aussi…. Gluck ne passera pas; il restera sur son socle d'airain, debout, comme les dieux antiques."

[88] *La Revue et Gazette musicale*, 10 November 1861. Here Fétis is writing in response to Paul Smith's highly laudatory review of *Alceste* in the 27 October issue. Perhaps not surprisingly, the idea that this repertoire should be presented only in concert version represents a direct (and perhaps intentional) contrast with Wagner's opinions. In an article in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, for example (1 July 1854), Wagner opines that he "can imagine no more hideous travesty of a dramatic, and especially a tragic piece of music, than to have Orestes and Iphigenia, for instance,—in tail-coat and ball-dress…—proclaiming their death-agonies in front of a concert-orchestra." Translation taken from Richard Wagner, *Judaism in Music and Other Essays*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (Lincoln, NE, and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 156.

**Fig. 1.3: D. Philippe, *Madame Viardot dans "Orphée" de Gluck*, 1860. Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris.**

Fétis's perspective seems to have been the dominant one for most of the nineteenth century, and despite Gluck's increasing status as an icon of French artistic achievement, the appearance of one of his works remained an unusual and noteworthy event for much of the century. By 1870, though, the stage was set for a major return of Gluck's operas to the forefront of the Parisian musical scene. France began to seek its own musical champions to combat outside influences, a trend that would continue through the turn of the century. Particularly in the wake of the disastrous Parisian première of Richard Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in 1861, the city was ready to set up a French composer in opposition to the Germanic influence, and Gluck was an excellent choice. Comparisons between the two composers had cropped up in the French press from the 1850s on, with many anti-Wagnerians finding the newer composer to be derivative, at

least in his music-dramatic theories.[89] Gluck, like Wagner, was an operatic reformer (but a *successful* one, in the eyes of many French critics) with a "système" of musical composition, and the eighteenth-century operatic reforms that Gluck had proposed in his often-quoted (both in the nineteenth-century and now) preface to *Alceste* served well to demonstrate French superiority.[90] Nearly every review of the 1861 production reprinted, analyzed, or analyzed the preface to *Alceste*, examining in detail how the composer applied his musico-dramatic theories to the opera's composition. For example, a three-part article series by A. Thurner in *La France musicale* focused a great deal of attention on Gluck's artistic principles, and Berlioz himself addressed the issue in the *Journal des débats*.[91]

Gluck had another connection to Wagner as well; in 1847 the latter had adapted *Iphigénie en Aulide* for a performance in Dresden, and the overture, in particular, held particular significance for the composer. [92] As early as 1841, he showered the work with

[89] Gerald D. Turbow, "Art and Politics: Wagnerism in France," in *Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics*, ed. David C. Large and William Weber, in collaboration with Anne Dzamba Sessa (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 148. Katharine Ellis has also explored the extent to which Fétis's anti-Wagnerism shaped critical perceptions of the composer, including his derivation from earlier French sources. See Katharine Ellis, "Wagner and Anti-Wagnerism in the Paris Periodical Press, 1852–1870," in *Von Wagner zum Wagnérisme: Musik, Literatur, Kunst, Politik*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Manuela Schwartz (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1999), 51–83.

[90] A thorough analysis of the preface to *Alceste* as well as the complete text (in translation) may be found in Alfred Einstein, *Gluck*, trans. Eric Blom (London: Dent, 1964). For details of the 1861 *Tannhäuser*, see Annegret Fauser, " 'Cette musique sans tradition': Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and its French Critics," in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (University of Chicago Press: 2009): 228–55.

[91] *La France musicale*, 13-27 October 1861; *Le Journal des débats*, 12–24 October 1861.

[92] Barry Millington has succinctly summarized Wagner's changes: "[h]is arrangement was, according to the lights of his time, a sincere and sensitive attempt to present the opera in an acceptable form. Finding the arias and choruses 'disconnected,' he linked them by means of preludes, postludes and transitions… The orchestration was also revised but with restraint and always with the aim of highlighting features of Gluck's own score. His major alteration was to eliminate what he regarded as the predictable and sentimental marriage of Achilles and Iphigenia at the end; in order to effect this return to the spirit of Euripides it was necessary to introduce a new character (Artemis) as well as some recitatives." Barry

praise in the French press in an article entitled "De L'Ouverture" in *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* (10, 14, 17 January 1841), using it as his primary example for the dramatic capabilities of the operatic overture.[93]

It is significant, then, that we find *Alceste* appearing in Paris in 1861, immediately following the failure of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and his new compositional "système" to win over critics and audiences.[94] Fauquet even points out that some of the same sets were used in both *Alceste* and *Tannhäuser*, presenting viewers with visual connections between the two.[95] Comparisons between Gluck and Wagner became increasingly prevalent in French (and German) criticism of the 1860s, and, as Wagnerism began to infiltrate Paris, Gluck's music became a battleground between those who saw Gluck as the predecessor to Wagner and those who saw him as an alternative, a subject to which I will turn in detail in Chapter 3.

**Rameau**

For all intents and purposes, Rameau's operas were never revived in the nineteenth century. By the 1790s, as Mongrédien tells us, "Rameau and his predecessors had disappeared from the bill [at the Opéra] and entered a long-lasting purgatory."[96] The last

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Millington, *Wagner*, revised ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 31. Wagner's own comments on adapting the work may be found in Richard Wagner, *My Life*, trans. Andrew Gray, ed. Mary Whitall (New York: Da Capo Press, 1992), 337–40.

[93] In addition, in 1854 he published an article in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (1 July 1854) focusing on his adaptation of the overture to *Iphigénie*.

[94] For more detail on the 1861 struggles around Gluck and Wagner, see William Gibbons, "Music of the Past, Music of the Future: *Tannhäuser* and *Alceste* at the Paris Opéra," *19th Century Music* 33/3 (Spring 2010, forthcoming).

[95] Fauquet, "Berlioz and Gluck," 208.

[96] Mongrédien, *French Music from the Enlightenment to Romanticism*, 72.

production of *Castor et Pollux* (1737), Rameau's most enduringly popular opera, took place in 1784. All of the composer's dramatic works, composed between the 1730s and 1760s, seem to have been tied too clearly to *ancien régime* French culture to be effectively resurrected after the revolution. But, as Danièle Pistone points out, even if Rameau's operas disappeared from the stage, "his name was nevertheless far from falling into obscurity" during this time.[97] Instead, he was held up as the paragon of a golden age of French music—respected, but from an earlier period whose time in the spotlight had passed. Despite the absence of Rameau's works on the Parisian stage, the composer was not without his partisans in the nineteenth century. In 1832, the first of the "Concerts historiques," an effort spearheaded by Fétis, included a chorus from *Zoroastre* (1749), and the late 1830s saw several articles on the composer (if not specifically his operas) in major music journals.[98] A few decades later, excerpts from several of Rameau's operas were being performed on Jules Pasdeloup's "concerts populaires" (though these pieces never achieved the same popularity on the series as Mendelssohn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Weber); much as we have seen with Gluck's music during this time, these *morceaux* were restricted to short and particularly tuneful choruses or a few famous arias.[99] Similarly, Rameau's works were represented with some frequency (though certainly not to the extent that Gluck's were) in the Société des Concerts, largely thanks to the

[97] Danièle Pistone, "Rameau à Paris au XIX$^{e}$ siècle," in *Jean-Philippe Rameau: Colloque international, organisé par la Société Rameau*, ed. Jérôme de la Gorce (Paris and Geneva: Champion-Slatkine, 1987), 131: "son nom était cependant fort loin d'être tombé dans l'oubli."

[98] Pistone, "Rameau à Paris," 133.

[99] For background on the concert series, see Élisabeth Bernard, "Jules Pasdeloup et les Concerts populaires," *Revue de musicologie* 57 (1971): 150–78. Popular *morceaux* from Rameau's operas during the mid-century included the "Trio des songes" and Rigaudon from *Dardanus*, and the "Choeur de l'enfer" and "Choeur des Champs-Elysées" from *Castor et Pollux*.

influence of Adolphe Adam and Charles Poisot.[100] Adam also wrote a biography of Rameau in 1852, in an effort to help popularize the composer's work. Finally, Pauline Viardot included a Rameau aria in her collection of arias entitled *Ecole de chant classique* (1863)—an endorsement of the composer by one of France's most revered advocates of eighteenth-century music.[101]

The closest that any complete Rameau opera came to a full revival during the nineteenth century was a performance of *Castor et Pollux* in 1814. One cannot exactly describe it as a "Rameau" revival, however, since the work in question is Pierre-Joseph Candeille's revision of Rameau's original, which had been premièred at the Opéra in 1791. In reality, this work included only a small amount of Rameau's music, and even that was heavily adapted to correspond to the style of the late eighteenth century. While Candeille's was acknowledged to be the major musical contributor, though, it seems clear that the symbolic value of Rameau's work was attached to the production as well.
It is significant that the work was chosen to celebrate the Bourbon restoration to the French throne. The music itself was largely irrelevant; more important was the symbolic resurrection of a work that highlighted the creative achievements of the Old Order. The unsigned review in the *Journal des débats*, for example, highlights the relationship of *Castor et Pollux* to the *ancien régime*, pointing out that the work was "first performed in 1737 with music by Rameau, revived in 1753, then in 1770 for the Dauphin's marriage"—demonstrating a direct connection to the royal family.[102] The critic goes on to

[100] Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past*, 76.

[101] Pistone, "Rameau à Paris," 136.

[102] *Journal des débats*, 30 December 1814. "Cet opéra, donné d'abord en 1737 avec la musique de Rameau, repris en 1753, puis en 1770 pour le mariage du Dauphin…."

suggest another connection between the composer and France's rulers, asserting that while other composers may have become more prominent that Rameau since the revolution, they had "perished in defeat: Rameau, as their king, has been held in reserve to embellish the triumph of the victors."[103] Despite the value placed on "Rameau's" opera here, it seems unlikely that the 1814 revival was an economic success, and critics were not impressed.[104] One must assume, then, that the symbolic value of the work superseded its lack of economic value; its significance was in indicating a return to previous French glories of the eighteenth century. But such efforts were evidently wasted on Parisian audiences of the early nineteenth century, who were beginning to be much more interested in the new and "modern" music being imported from other countries, particularly Italian opera and, eventually, Mozart. This failed revival provides a useful perspective on how far French theaters and audiences were willing to go to preserve music history. The Opéra's role as "musical museum" was limited to the time of Gluck and after—anything before that was too far divided from the musical values of the nineteenth century.

Aside from this single (and problematic) revival, none of Rameau's complete operas saw the light of day in the nineteenth century. The reasons for this neglect are eminently practical, or, in Ellis's words, "brutally pragmatic": his works were simply not seen as being economically viable.[105] Nor did the composer's operas receive a friendlier treatment in the press, when they were discussed at all. Berlioz, for example, consistently

[103] "Les autres musiciens avaient péri dans la défaite: Rameau, comme leur roi, avait été réservé pour orner le triomphe des vainqueurs."

[104] Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past*, 16.

[105] Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past*, 140.

viewed Rameau as an inferior substitute for Gluck. In 1842 Berlioz devoted two articles in *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* to *Castor et Pollux*, in which—not surprisingly—he consistently found Rameau to be inferior to Gluck.[106] The harmonic complexity of the music intrigued Berlioz, and he found the libretto passable if antiquated, yet the prevalence of ornamental dance music mystified him, and he considered the overture (like all French Baroque overtures) abominable—"an ensemble of unimaginable awkwardness and triviality."[107] The music, it would seem, was simply too far outside the horizon of expectations found in nineteenth-century Parisian opera goers—even those as open minded and respectful of *la musique ancienne* as Berlioz. It was not until the early twentieth century that this perception changed enough to warrant a production at one of Paris's major operatic venues, and in Chapter 4 I will examine how Rameau's fortunes began to change in the years leading up to the turn of the century.

[106] For further (though still brief) discussion of Berlioz's treatment of Rameau, see Catherine Massip, "Berlioz and Early Music," in *Berlioz: Past, Present, Future*, ed. Peter Bloom (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 25–28.

[107] *La Revue et Gazette musicale* (13 November 1842). Quoted in Massip, "Berlioz and Early Music," 27.

## CHAPTER 2

## MOZART

By 1875, Mozart was the only eighteenth-century composer whose works were regularly performed in Parisian opera houses. His fame rested on three operas: *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Die Zauberflöte*, and, most importantly, *Don Giovanni*—a work that attained a near-legendary quality in France over the course of the nineteenth century.[1] After fifty years of uninterrupted success in France, it seemed that nothing could topple Mozart's position as the lone Classical figure atop the operatic canon. The composer's status was so secure that Adolphe Jullien was frankly bemused at how Mozart could ever have been unsuccessful in France:

> At present, when admiration for *Don Juan* has become an article of faith of the religion of music, and when this opinion generally renders misfortune unto those that fail to find in this work one of the most dazzling manifestations of genius, it is curious at times to think back to the time when Mozart's works were introduced in France and to realize what a sad welcome they received [in the early nineteenth century].[2]

As critics and audiences gradually became more chauvinistic in their efforts to demonstrate France's great music history, however, some began to question Mozart's

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[1] See Chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion of the early nineteenth-century reception of Mozart's works.

[2] *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 5 December 1875. "A présent que l'admiration pour *Don Juan* est devenue un article de foi de la religion musicale, et que celui-là se ferait généralement honnir qui méconnaîtrait dans ces ouvrage l'une des plus éclatantes manifestations du génie, il est curieux de se reporter au temps de l'apparition des ouvrages de Mozart en France et de voir quel triste accueil ils reçurent."

prominence at the Opéra and Opéra-Comique. By 1904, musicologist Jean d'Udine could observe that audiences had turned away from Mozart towards other composers, particularly Beethoven and Wagner:

> Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Mozart passed, in the opinion of the dilettantes, as the ruling genius of music, and, like Raphael in painting, his name became almost dogmatically a synonym for perfection, grace, an unsurpassable ideal… The cult of Beethoven, followed by the cult of Wagner, would quickly shake this article of faith. In the face of the formidable worlds that these two belatedly recognized geniuses opened to the lovers of great art, the musician of Salzburg was all but forgotten.[3]

There was a limit, it appears, to how much German music could be tolerated in the nationalistic environment of *fin-de-siècle* France. With Beethoven's domination of the concert hall and, more importantly, Wagner's of the Opéra, maintaining another Germanic composer in the permanent repertoire came dangerously close to suggesting that France lacked capable composers.

After the 1890s, as Wagner became increasingly popular, performances of *Don Juan* slowed down dramatically at the Opéra and Opéra-Comique. There were brief revivals at both in 1904, a single revival at the latter in 1912, and then nothing until well after World War I (See Table 2.1). Nor was *Don Juan* replaced by Mozart's other operas, as only isolated productions appeared during this time, and rarely to great acclaim. This chapter explores the dramatic shift in Mozart's popularity in the opera house, which was a reflection of changing perceptions about both the composer and the nature of his works.

[3] *Les Arts de la vie*, January 1904. "Jusqu'au dernier quart du XIXe siècle, Mozart passa, dans l'opinion des dilettantes, pour le génie souverain de la musique, et, comme celui de Raphaël en peinture, son nom devint presque dogmatiquement synonyme de perfection, de grâce et d'idéal inégalables…. Le culte de Beethoven, suivi du culte de Wagner, allait bientôt ébranler cet article de foi. Devant les mondes formidables que ces deux génies, tardivement reconnus, découvrirent aux amateurs de grand art, on oublia le musicien de Salzbourg."

**Table 2.1: Major Revivals of Mozart Operas at the Opéra and Opéra-Comique, 1875–1918**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Don Juan* | Opéra | 1875 |
| *Les Noces de Figaro* | Opéra-Comique | 1886 |
| *Don Juan* | Opéra | 1887 |
| *La Flûte enchantée* | Opéra-Comique | 1893 |
| *Don Juan* | Opéra | 1896 |
| *Don Juan* | Opéra-Comique | 1896 |
| *Bastien et Bastienne* | Opéra-Comique | 1900 |
| *L'Enlèvement au sérail* | Opéra | 1903 |
| *Don Juan* | Opéra | 1904 |
| *Don Juan* | Opéra-Comique | 1904 |
| *La Flûte enchantée* | Opéra-Comique | 1909 |
| *Don Juan* | Opéra-Comique | 1912 |

I will begin by giving an overview of *Don Juan*'s reception at the *fin de siècle*, since Mozart's success at the opera house was directly tied to this work's fortunes for most of that time. Furthermore, the reception of *Don Juan* best reflects the transition from the nineteenth-century perception of Mozart as a "Romantic" composer to the twentieth-century view of him as "Classical" figure. I will then address the political ramifications that occurred as the cosmopolitan image of a "universal" Mozart came under attack by more nationalist critics and audience members. One main shift in Mozart's reception was how *fin-de-siècle* critics, coping with the gender issues of their time, perceived him in terms of being a "masculine" versus "feminine" composer. Finally, in the case study to this chapter, I investigate the 1909 production of *La Flûte enchantée*, which represented an effort to rescue Mozart from these charges of frivolity, and to present gender roles more appropriate to Republican ideology on the *fin-de-siècle* stage.

### *Don Juan* after 1870

The decades around 1900 saw a fundamental shift in how both critics and audiences perceived Mozart and his operas. For most of the nineteenth century, the composer was largely seen as a "modern" figure. Yet during the *fin-de-siècle* Mozart gradually evolved into a "Classical" composer, and his works consequently demanded a level of "authenticity" in performance that was unnecessary for contemporary works. This transition is most visible in the changing attitudes towards *Don Juan*. As Table 2.1 demonstrates, despite a decline in the number of productions during the first years of the twentieth century, *Don Juan* appeared substantially more often than any of Mozart's other works. This popularity resulted mostly from the opera's historical connection with French audiences. The French version produced most often throughout the nineteenth century was created (at least in part) by the scholar and critic Castil-Blaze (François-Henri-Joseph Blaze) in 1822, incorporating elements of Molière's *Dom Juan* (1665).[4] Though this version was superseded by the 1834 *Don Juan* created by Henri Blaze de Bury (Castil-Blaze's son) and Emile Deschamps, the lingering connection between Mozart's opera and Molière undoubtedly helped critics and audience members think of *Don Juan* as an inherently French opera well into the twentieth century. Even as late as 1925, in Reynaldo Hahn's operetta *Mozart* (libretto by Sacha Guitry), the titular composer specifically claims that he had read Molière's *Dom Juan* while in Paris (in 1778) and had been inspired by the play to compose an opera on the subject.

There was also a sense of concrete, physical possession of the opera in France during the *fin-de-siècle*. As I discussed in Chapter 1, Pauline Viardot—a central figure in

[4] Katharine Ellis, "Rewriting *Don Giovanni*, or 'The Thieving Magpies,' " *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 119 (1994), 214.

the performance of Classical music in the nineteenth century—brought Mozart's autograph score of *Don Giovanni* to Paris in 1855, where it occupied a place of honor in her home until she eventually donated it to the Bibliothèque da la Conservatoire.[5] When this "cult" was combined with the near-constant performances of the work in Paris for decades, French audiences began to perceive *Don Giovanni*, or really, *Don Juan*, as their own cultural property. The critic Paul Bernard, for example, in rejecting Wagner's invasion of the Opéra in 1861, contrasted *Tannhäuser* with "our [French] masterworks…our *Guillaume Tell*, our *Don Juan*, our *Lucie*, our *Juive*, and our *Huguenots*…."[6] Of these "French" masterpieces, only *La Juive*, by Halévy, was written by an unquestionably French composer. In the case of Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*, their Frenchness seems result from being composed or adapted by the composer for French audiences. But *Don Juan* still does not fit; Mozart certainly had no hand in the sweeping changes made to the work for performance in Paris. In the minds of critics and audiences, however, *Don Juan* had become a French opera by the 1860s.

Because of this position as a "French" work—albeit not one by a French composer—*Don Juan* enjoyed a unique position after 1870. While nearly all Mozart's other works receded into the background of Parisian operatic life after 1870, *Don Juan* continued to attract audiences for decades after the War. In 1875, the opera was performed as part of the inaugural season at the Palais Garnier, the new home of the

[5] On Viardot's position as priestess of a "Mozart cult" in nineteenth-century France, see Mark Everist, "Enshrining Mozart: *Don Giovanni* and the Viardot Circle," *19th-Century Music* 25 (2001-2002): 165–89.

[6] *Le Ménestrel*, 24 March 1861. "nos chefs-d'œuvres…notre *Guillame Tell*, notre *Don Juan*, notre *Lucie*, notre *Juive*, nos *Huguenots*…."

Opéra; significantly, it was the only non-French opera produced that season. Adolphe Jullien reports that, in fact, the original intention of the Opéra director, Émile Perrin, was to have *Don Juan* performed at the opening gala on 5 January, but that he had been overruled for nationalist reasons.[7] The music itself, however, seems to have been less important than the opportunity it created for spectacle in the new theater. François de Lagenevais (a pseudonym for Henri Blaze de Bury), for example, wrote in *La Revue musicale* of the opera's ball scene that:

> As for the party at Don Juan's home, with its masked dances, its new costumes from the old Comédie Italienne, its ballets, parading and prancing with the driving rhythm of the Turkish march in the midst of a flood of light and in the immense space of the theater, one cannot image such a spectacle—"blinding" does not do it justice; it is above all very amusing to see the sparkling of the fabrics, the colors and the variety of the groups [on stage].[8]

A similar approach was taken by other critics; H. Moreno (a pseudonym for Henri Heugel), for example, spent a several long paragraphs of his review in *Le Ménestrel* discussing the elaborate staging, which he found to be a "splendid spectacle."[9] This emphasis on the spectacle rather than on Mozart's music essentially avoided addressing the work itself, or its composer, in the post-war environment of the 1870s. Focusing on the work's "modern" staging techniques was both a way of placing *Don Juan* in the

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[7] Adolphe Jullien, *Paris dilettante au commencement du siècle* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1884), 380–382.

[8] Quoted in Kahane, "Don Juan à l'Opéra, 1805–1962," in *Don Juan* [Exhibition Catalogue, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 25 April – 5 July 1991] (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1991), 215. "Quant à la fête chez don Juan, avec ses quadrilles masqués, ses costumes renouvelés de l'ancienne Comédie Italienne, ses ballets défilant et se trémoussant sur le rythme entraînant da la marche turque au milieu d'un torrent de lumière et dans la profondeur immense du théâtre, on n'imagine pas un pareil spectacle, éblouissant ne suffit pas; c'est surtout très amusant par le miroitement des étoffes, le pittoresque et la variété des groupes."

[9] *Le Ménestrel*, 5 December 1875.

context of the nineteenth, rather than the eighteenth, century, and also of celebrating French stagecraft.

In 1887, on the centenary of the Prague premiere of *Don Giovanni*, Moreno again had occasion to write about *Don Juan* in *Le Ménestrel*. This time, he was not so pleased with the work's changing fortunes:

> My God, the Opéra has neglected it for some years, this incomparable masterwork…It has still been loved, without doubt, but with a purely platonic love…. It was a respected ancestor, to whom one gives the best seat…in the library, but for whom one didn't bother to light the lamps.[10]

The 1887 *Don Juan*, despite its aims to rectify this situation, was a disappointment to critics, not least because of a perceived miscasting. The general consensus was that the performance of the title role, taken by Jean Lassalle, was simply not up to the standards set by Jean-Baptiste Faure in decades past.[11] Moreno was bitterly disappointed in his hopes that the Opéra would rekindle audiences' appreciation for Mozart, and he placed the blame squarely on the directors and performers of the theater:

> The Parisian celebration of the centenary of *Don Juan* has been what it would be with the current resources [i.e., singers] of the Académie nationale de musique, nothing but an agreeable parody of Mozart's masterpiece. One must confess that the directors of the Opéra have a unique way of *celebrating* people; it's a good thing the dead do not return from their tombs![12]

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[10] *Le Ménestrel*, 25 September 1887. "Mon Dieu, l'Opéra l'avait délaissé depuis quelques années, cet incomparable chef-d'œuvre….On l'aimait sans doute, mais d'un amour purement platonique…. C'était un ancêtre respecté, auquel on donnait la meilleure place…dans la bibliothèque, mais pour lequel on ne se souciait pas d'allumer les quinquets."

[11] Kahane, "Don Juan à l'Opéra," 215.

[12] *Le Ménestrel*, 30 October 1887. "La célébration du centenaire de *Don Juan* à Paris a été ce qu'elle devait être avec les ressources actuelles de notre Académie nationale de musique, rien autre qu'une aimable parodie du chef-d'œuvre de Mozart. Il faut avouer que les directeurs de l'Opéra ont une façon singulière de *célébrer* les gens ; heureusement que les morts ne sortent pas de leur tombeau !"

For Moreno, it was unthinkable that the work itself could be at fault for the public's lukewarm reception. Any deficiency must have been the result of poor performances and incompetent direction. Other critics noted the singers' difficulty with Mozart's music: Johannès Weber began the final paragraph of his review in *Le Temps* with "One can guess what I am forced to say about the performance" before turning to the numerous faults of individual singers.[13] Evidently, the failure of the production was common knowledge. Furthermore, it seems Weber was reluctant to give any commentary on the performances at all, as though a bad performance of *Don Juan* at the Opéra was an embarrassment to all of France.

The 1890s proved to be a more successful decade for Mozart's opera in Paris. One marker of this success came in 1890, when Charles Gounod published an analysis of the opera, *Le Don Juan de Mozart* (Paris: Ollendorff), which is essentially an extended celebration of the opera's perfection—and that of its composer. "There are in history certain men," Gounod wrote in his preface, "who seem destined to mark, in their own sphere, a pinnacle beyond which it is impossible to advance. … Mozart is one of these men; *Don Juan* is such a pinnacle."[14] Gounod seems determined to rescue the Romantic vision of the "divine Mozart," capable of musical feats unattained since his death. Nearly every page of Gounod's text is aimed at reaffirming this message, reminding the reader at every opportunity of Mozart's musical perfection. In the midst of a brief discussion of

[13] *Le Temps*, 31 October 1887. "On peut prévoir ce que je suis obligé de dire de l'exécution."

[14] Charles Gounod, *Mozart's* Don Giovanni*: A Commentary*, trans. Windeyer Clark and J.T. Hutchinson (New York: Da Capo, 1970), vi. Translation amended.

Zerlina's "Pace, pace, o vita mia," for example, Gounod breaks into a seemingly unprovoked apostrophe to the composer:

> Mozart, divine Mozart! To know thee is to worship thee. Thou art the personification of perpetual truth, perfect beauty, inexhaustible charm; always profound, yet always clear; combining the entire knowledge of humanity with the simplicity of childhood! Thou hast experienced all things, and expressed them in a musical language that has never been, and never will be, surpassed.[15]

Gounod's book exudes a sense of desperate fervency; it seems as though he had noted Mozart's—or at least *Don Juan*'s—position in the operatic canon being threatened and hence had to make some effort to restore him to his rightful place. Adolphe Jullien certainly sensed Gounod's desperation, and wasted no time in suggesting in 1890 that "M. Gounod, disheartened to see that the journals speak of nothing about him whereas they still speak continually about Richard Wagner, calls Mozart to the rescue."[16] The Wagnerian Jullien (who was also a Mozart lover) felt that by pointing to the true genius of Mozart, Gounod used the composer in his attempt to shift attention away from Wagner towards his own aesthetic stance. For Jullien, Gounod's absolute faith in the composer of *Don Juan* was misplaced; a more tempered and less devout "worship" of Mozart was required. For this reason, Jullien's ultimate opinion of Gounod's work was not positive:

> Conclusion: this book, with its infantile rhetoric and filled with alleged explanations, at which Mozart himself would be appalled, is of no use whatsoever, either to those who admire *Don Juan* and who have a much fairer idea of the work, or to those who have no taste for it at all and for whom this interminable exegesis instead separates them even further from

[15] Gounod, *Mozart's* Don Giovanni, 60.

[16] This excerpt is reprinted in Adolphe Jullien, *Musique: mélanges d'histoire et de critique musical et dramatique* (Paris: Librairie de l'Art, 1896), 281–82. "M. Gounod, désespéré de voir les journaux ne rien dire de lui tandis qu'on parle encore et toujours de Richard Wagner, appelle Mozart à la rescousse."

> the master. Moreover, it was entirely inappropriate to include Mozart in this absurdity in which one devotes oneself through this unbridled admiration and this profusion of ramblings in a style as pretentious as it was "prudhommesque"…[17]

Gounod's tenacious hold on the Romantic vision of Don Giovanni (the character and the work) is illustrative. If *Don Juan* began to lose its position as the paragon of Romantic operatic perfection, it would be subjected to the same types of criticism leveled at other eighteenth-century works, a fate Gounod evidently could not allow. Furthermore, it is certainly possible, as Jullien suggested, that Gounod was attempting to position himself as Mozart's heir. Such a supposition seems supported by, for example, a portrait of Gounod dating from the late 1870s (see Fig. 2.2) in which the composer appears almost in a trance, clutching to his breast a score of Mozart's opera as though he were lost in pondering its secrets. Steven Huebner has pointed out that during this time Gounod "brandished *Don Giovanni* as a sword and shield to combat *wagnérisme*," holding up Mozart's opera as a true model for French composers—a model realized in himself and in Saint-Saëns.[18] If Gounod was Mozart's true heir (or thought he was), then any challenge to *Don Juan* would have been perceived as a threat to Gounod's dominant position on the *fin-de-siècle* operatic stage. Holding tenaciously to the Romantic vision of Mozart was indirectly an effort to retain the primacy of Gounod's Romantic aesthetic. In other words,

[17] Jullien, *Musique*, 295. "Conclusion: ce livre de rhétorique enfantine et rempli de prétendue explications contre les quelles Mozart se révolterait ne peut être d'aucune utilité, ni pour ceux que admirent *Don Juan* et qui s'en font une idée beaucoup plus juste à [l'œuvre], ni pour ceux qui ne le goûtent guère et que cette exégèse interminable éloignerait plutôt du maître. De plus, il était tout à fait inopportun d'englober Mozart dans le ridicule auquel on se vouait par cette admiration déréglée et cette débauche de gloses en un style aussi prétentieux que prudhommesque…"

[18] Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 202.

the heir to a "Romantic" Mozart could be a Romantic composer like Gounod, whereas a "Classical" composer would require a "Classical" heir.

Luckily for Gounod, then, by 1896 Mozart's position looked somewhat improved. After nearly a decade away from the Paris stages, *Don Juan* was produced at both the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique in the same month, with no significant alterations to the French version of the work with which audiences were familiar. The work's unusually long absence was noted by critics, some of whom argued that the opera houses were irresponsible in their treatment of Mozart and other "Classical" composers. Paul Dukas was among the most vociferous of these:

> It has already been several years since we have had *Don Juan*. It is, perhaps, only in France that one sees these long absences of musical masterworks at which no one would dream of taking offense. Suppose that tomorrow someone should put certain canvases by Rembrandt or Velasquez back into the attic at the Louvre. What a furor! But if one should banish from our opera houses *Der Freischütz*, *Fidelio*, *Alceste*, *Armide*, *Iphigénie*, *Les Troyens*, etc., etc., who would take notice? *Don Juan* was one of these ostracized scores. It will be restored to its rank and no one will complain about it. And we even have two *Don Juan*s in place of one, the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique competing over the glory of performing for us this masterwork by Mozart, who must without doubt be quite dumbfounded with this resurgence of enthusiasm. This is the way of the world: old or young, dead or alive, one never performs you unless one plays you too much.[19]

[19] *Revue hebdomadaire*, September 1896. Reprinted in *Les Écrits de Paul Dukas sur la musique* (Paris: Société d'éditions françaises et internationales, 1948), 343. "Voici déjà plusieurs années que nous n'avions eu *Don Juan*. Il n'y a peut-être qu'en France qu'on voit de ces longues éclipses des chefs-d'œuvre de la musique dont personne ne songe à se formaliser. Supposez que demain on remise dans les greniers du Louvre certaines toiles de Rembrandt ou de Velasquez. Le beau tapage ! Mais qu'on ait proscrit du répertoire de nos scènes lyriques *Freischütz*, *Fidelio*, *Alceste*, *Armide*, *Iphigénie*, les *Troyens*, etc., etc., qui donc y prend garde ? *Don Juan* était au nombre de ces partitions frappées d'ostracisme. Il sera remis à son rang, et nul ne s'en plaindra. Et nous aurons même deux *Don Juan* au lieu d'un, l'Opéra et l'Opéra-Comique se disputant à présent la gloire de nous rendre le chef-d'œuvre de Mozart, lequel doit sans doute être bien ébahi de ce regain d'enthousiasme. Ainsi va le monde : vieux ou jeunes, morts ou vifs, on ne vous jouera point, à moins qu'on ne vous joue trop."

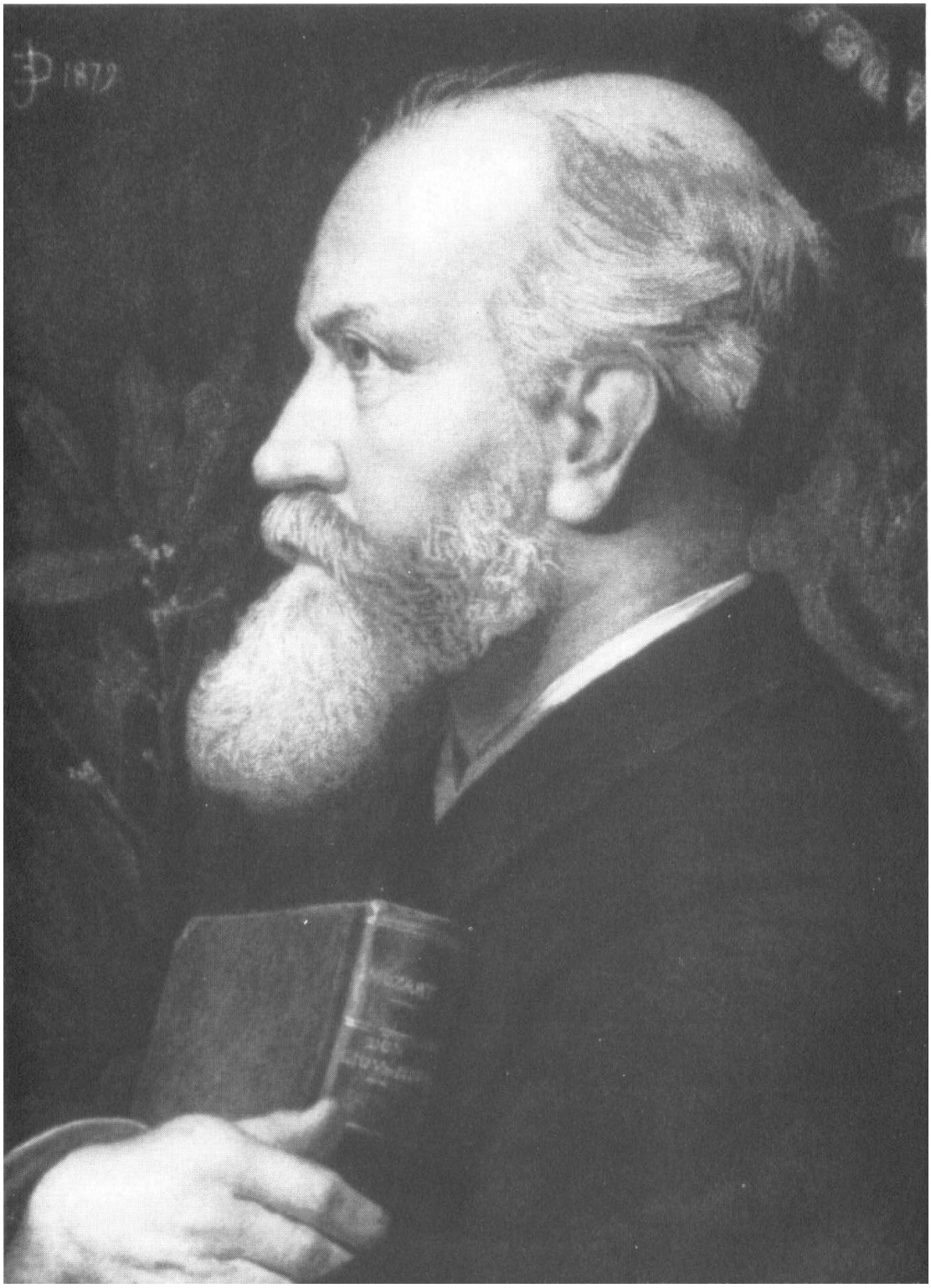

**Fig. 2.1: Portrait of Gounod holding a *Don Giovanni* score (1879). This image, held by the Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra in Paris, is reprinted in Huebner, *The Operas of Charles Gounod* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), Plate 10.**

Dukas's wish for a renewed interest in Mozart was granted; the critic M.-P. Pascal-Estienne, writing in *L'Europe artiste*, certainly noticed something of a revival: "Mozart is played, sung, and praised in Paris at the end of 1896…. Mozart is in relief, and we take the opportunity to offer him our own homage in our columns."[20] The unusual double production of 1896 was likely encouraged by both the popularity of Gounod's monograph and the success of Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice* at the Opéra-Comique earlier that year (see Chapter 3), which demonstrated anew the possibilities of eighteenth-century opera on the modern stage.

Both of these Mozart productions were received with more enthusiasm than any production of the opera since the 1860s. Dukas was hopeful that the performances signaled a more permanent position for Mozart (and other eighteenth-century composers) on Parisian stages:

> We know that the most authentic masterpieces of music are not, in our theaters, performed as routinely as one might suppose; they are subjected to eclipses, the frequency of which is deplorable. The revival of Gluck's *Orphée* was a resounding event last season, and the simultaneous performance Mozart's *Don Juan* at the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique at the beginning of the present season has taken on an importance that calls attention to the offhand manner with which one treats the classical masters; must their fundamental works always leave the stage for such a long time? Is it acceptable that they should retake their place there about every ten years for a series of several performances, after which nothing more is said of them? Must they not alternate, in an ongoing fashion, with modern works and form the core of the repertoire of the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique, as one sees Racine, Corneille and Molière alongside Dumas, d'Augier, and M. Pailleron at the Comédie Française?[21]

[20] *L'Europe artiste*, 22 November 1896. "Mozart est joué, chanté, louangé à Paris en cette fin d'année 1896 : l'Académie de Musique reprenait *Don Juan* il y a quelques jours, l'Opéra-Comique le donne cette semaine, et l'Exposition du Théâtre et de la Musique offrait à ses spectateurs de mardi dernier une Conférence sur Mozart enfant, suivie d'un acte en vers : *Mozart enfant*. Mozart est donc en relief, et nous en profitons pour lui décerner nous-même un hommage dans nos colonnes."

These attitudes are revealing. Dukas returns here to a common theme in his criticism: the Operatic Museum. In his vision—and certainly many critics shared it—Mozart's opera would never be far from performance, as eighteenth-century masterworks would be placed alongside modern works in a permanent repertoire. The purpose of such a museum was the establishment of music-historical narratives, in which Mozart would continue to play a major role. Similar claims would be put forward over the course of the *fin de siècle* on behalf of Gluck and Rameau (see Chapters 3 and 4), always with this same educational goal in mind. Dukas's hopes in this regard were not entirely altruistic; the composer seems to have felt that his musical style had a kinship with Classical values and forms.[22] Thus, presenting Mozart's operas more regularly might have aggrandized Dukas's own aesthetic.

Furthermore, Dukas's position highlights changing perspectives on the modernity of *Don Juan*. Returning for a moment to Paul Bernard's list of "our [French] masterworks," which included "our *Guillaume Tell*, our *Don Juan*, our *Lucie*, our *Juive*,

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[21] *Chronique des Arts et de la Curiosité*, Nov. 1896. Reprinted in *Les Écrits de Paul Dukas sur la musique*, 353. "On sait que les plus authentiques chefs-d'œuvre de l'art musical ne sont pas, dans nos théâtres, exécutés aussi couramment qu'on le pourrait supposer : ils subissent des éclipses dont il est permis de déplorer la fréquence. La reprise de l'*Orphée* de Gluck a été l'an dernier un événement retentissant et la représentation presque simultanée de *Don Juan*, de Mozart, à l'Opéra et à l'Opéra-Comique, au début de la présente saison, a pris une importance qui doit appeler l'attention sur la désinvolture avec laquelle on traite les maîtres classiques ; leurs œuvres essentielles devaient-elles jamais quitter, pour un si long temps, la scène ? Est-il admissible qu'elles y reprennent rang tous les dix ans environ, pour une série de quelques exécutions, après lesquelles on n'en entend plus parler ? Ne devraient-elles par alterner, d'une façon courante, avec les ouvrages modernes et former le fond du répertoire de l'Opéra et de l'Opéra-Comique, comme on voit à la Comédie Française Racine, Corneille et Molière faire les lendemains de Dumas, d'Augier et de M. Pailleron?"

[22] Anya Suschitzky has pointed out the ways in which, because of its "clarity" and "lightness"—two terms that Dukas and others found in abundance in Mozart's operas—Dukas's opera *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* (1907) was received as a continuation of French classicism and Rameau's music in particular (see Chapter 4 for more on Dukas's connection to Rameau). Anya Suschitzky, "*Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*: Dukas, the Light, and the Well," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 9 (1997): 133–61.

and our *Huguenots*," it is clear that Bernard perceived *Don Juan* as a fundamentally nineteenth-century work, placing Mozart alongside Rossini, Donizetti, and Meyerbeer in the pantheon of Romantic composers.[23] By 1896, however, Dukas unequivocally identifies Mozart as a "Classical" composer—Mozart had, in short, transitioned from a composer of the nineteenth to one of the eighteenth century, at least for some critics. This change in perception carried with it a large amount of baggage. Nineteenth-century works could be treated with some flexibility; they were, after all, modern, and could be altered with impunity for the needs of each production. "Classical" works, however, as befitting their status as "museum pieces," required a certain degree of "authenticity" in performance.

Yet ideas of what an "authentic" production might be were anything but clear. The 1887 production—the centenary of the opera's Prague première—had purported to be an "authentic" presentation of the score, although a version of Castil-Blaze's translation of the libretto was still in use.[24] The Wagnerian critic and Mozart biographer Victor Wilder took issue with a claim to authenticity for the 1887 version, wryly noting in *Gil Blas*:

> Except for the aria *Ah! fuggi traditore*, replaced by a different aria that was written for the Vienna Elvira; except for Don Juan's aria (*Metà di voi*), cut as if useless; except for Leporello's (*Ah! pieta, Signori*), crossed out as if making the opera too long, except for a large ballet, constructed from bits and pieces, introduced forcibly into the first finale; except for a tenor aria (*Dalla sua pace*), transformed into a clarinet aria to accompany the raising of the curtain; except for the dénouement, which has been changed; except the original recitatives, replaced by Castil-Blaze's; except

[23] See footnote 7 above for Bernard's text.

[24] Martine Kahane, "Don Juan à l'Opéra," 215.

> finally some other modifications, all of little importance; the score is now entirely intact….[25]

Clearly Wilder felt that the Opéra's "authentic" production wrought havoc with Mozart's original score, a feeling shared by a number of critics in the following decades.[26] Even as early as 1875, some critics evidently felt that the Opéra should turn to the "authentic" Italian version of Mozart's opera. Moreno, however, writing in *Le Ménestrel,* felt compelled to argue in favor of the Opéra's decision to perform the nineteenth-century French adaptation:

> Some downhearted spirits still yet do not find at the French Opéra their Italian *Don Juan*. They add that the work has become too large, too important, too pretentious, that the tempos are too grand in it, too slow, and that the joviality, the spirit, and the verve have finally disappeared in Mozart's masterwork, —such as it is performed at our grand Opéra.
>
> It is evident that in changing the setting [i.e., the theater] of Mozart's sublime score, one must enlarge the design, but are we quite sure that the style of *Don Juan* is not, on the contrary, more at ease in the grand setting of the Opéra? I would willingly wager that it is. It is not that I approve, in principle, of the Opéra's regrettable tendencies to slow down indefinitely the recitatives and the greater part of the numbers in our operatic masterworks, but I am inclined to believe that, apart from this just reproach—applicable to the entire repertoire at the Opéra—the score of *Don Juan* would suffer from being interpreted in the Italian version on our première operatic stage. That is at least my humble opinion…[27]

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[25] Quoted in Kahane, "Don Juan à l'Opéra," 215. "Sauf l'air *Ah! fuggi traditore*, remplacé par un autre, écrit pour l'Elvire de Vienne, sauf l'air de don Juan (*Metà di voi*), coupé comme inutile, sauf celui de Leporello (*Ah ! pietà, Signori*), biffé comme faisant longueur, sauf un grand ballet, construit de pièces et de morceaux, introduit, de force, dans le premier finale, sauf un air de ténor (*Dalla sua pace*), transformé en air de clarinette pour servir le lever de rideau, sauf le dénouement qui a été changé, sauf les récitatifs originaux remplacé par ceux de Castil-Blaze, sauf enfin quelques autres modifications, de tout aussi peu d'importance, la partition est maintenant absolument intacte…."

[26] As Katharine Ellis reminds us, this conflict between "authentic" and "inauthentic" version of *Don Giovanni* was nothing new; similar arguments took place in the 1830s, as the Blaze/Deschamps version struggled to gain acceptance. Eventually, however, it (or some variation thereof) became the standard version and by the 1870s was well established as the "authentic" French *Don Juan.* Ellis, "Rewriting *Don Giovanni*."

Here Moreno seems to argue that the grand stage of the new Opéra demanded an equally "modern" interpretation of Mozart's work—one that reflected a post-Wagnerian sense of gravitas. Not only was the nineteenth-century version of *Don Juan* acceptable, but it was preferable to the "authentic" Italian version. The option for the Opéra simply to stop performing *Don Juan* does not seem to occur to Moreno. Instead, the ever-flexible masterwork had to adapt to the modern conditions in which it found itself.

Critics of later decades rejected this line of reasoning. In an 1894 article entitled "Charles Gounod and Mozart's *Don Juan*," Camille Saint-Saëns encouraged even those who were quite familiar with the opera to read Gounod's text, because

> most of those who think they know *Don Juan*, from having gone through it rapidly or heard it at the Opéra, split up into five Acts, spoiled by the translation and the sacrilegious alterations, even additions, of Castil-Blaze, in that vast building so unsuited both to the dainty orchestra and to the subject-matter, are in reality completely ignorant of it.[28]

Ironically, Saint-Saëns suggested that those who sought to learn more about the "authentic" version of Mozart's opera should turn to his mentor Gounod, who (while acknowledging the differences between the Italian and French versions) maintained a

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[27] *Le Ménestrel*, 5 December 1875. "Quelques esprits chagrins persistent pourtant à ne pas retrouver à l'Opéra français leur *Don Juan* italien. Ils ajoutent que l'œuvre y est devenue trop grande, trop importante, trop prétentieuse, que les mouvements en sont trop larges, trop lents, et que la gaieté, l'esprit et la verve disparaissent finalement du chef-d'œuvre de Mozart, —tel qu'on le représente à notre grand Opéra.

Il est évident qu'en changeant le cadre de la sublime partition de Mozart, on a dû en élargir le dessin, mais est-on bien sûr que le style de *Don Juan* ne soit pas au contraire plus à l'aise dans le grand cadre de l'Opéra ? Je parierais volontiers pour l'affirmative. Ce n'est pas que j'approuve, en principe, les tendances regrettables de l'Opéra à ralentir indéfiniment les récits et la plupart des morceaux de tous nos chefs-d'œuvre lyriques, mais j'incline à croire qu'à part ce juste reproche, –- applicable à tout le répertoire de l'Opéra, –- la partition de *Don Juan* perdrait à être interprétée dans les conditions italiennes sur notre première scène lyrique française. C'est du moins mon humble opinion…"

[28] Camille Saint-Saëns, *Outspoken Essays on Music*, trans. Fred Rothwell (London: Paul, Trench, and Trubner; New York: Dutton, 1922), 159.


**Fig 2.2: Victor Maurel as Don Juan at the Opéra-Comique (1896). *Musica*, November 1904.**

staunchly nineteenth-century perspective on *Don Juan*. Many critics and audience members joined Saint-Saëns in lambasting the productions at the Opéra. Martine Kahane has pointed out that the 1896 "dueling" productions at the Opéra and Opéra-Comique resulted in a "pressing demand from music lovers for another type of production, conforming to the original version."[29] A few years later, Gabriel Fauré evidently felt that the concert performances of *Don Juan* organized by Reynaldo Hahn at the Nouveau Théâtre in 1903 offered a refreshing change: "the performance was alert, light-hearted,

[29] Kahane, "*Don Juan* à l'Opéra," 217. "une demande pressante des amateurs pour un autre type de production, conforme à la version originale."

tender, moving and dramatic, but totally devoid of the unwarranted tone of solemnity that normally weighs down this masterpiece under the pretext of better honoring it."[30] For Fauré, then, Hahn's production—which lasted only three performances—was the exception rather than the rule. "Normally," Fauré implies, the work was staged in an unsatisfactorily Romanticized, and thus inauthentic, fashion. To a certain extent, Fauré's assessment supported Moreno's point: the Nouveau Théâtre was a much smaller stage, with a smaller audience, allowing (according to Moreno's standards) a more "authentic" performance than the Opéra's cavernous hall did.

The following year, Fauré was the only major critic to dwell at any length on the revivals of *Don Juan* at the Opéra and Opéra-Comique, which seem to have been basically replicas of the 1896 productions. Fauré took the opportunity again to complain about the production at the Opéra, pointing out that:

> The Opéra took up *Don Juan* again last night, which is to say a *Don Juan* particular to the Académie nationale de musique and which differs, alas, from *Don Giovanni*…on a number of points besides the replacement of the Italian text with a French one, an amplified *Don Juan*, because it was necessary for it to take up the entire evening, and made solemn because, for a long time we have noted a propensity to surround masterworks with a pomp that they do not at all demand.
>
> To enumerate the travesties to which Mozart's *Don Giovanni* has been subjected would take too long. To research the multiple causes of these travesties would lead to conclusions unflattering to our [national] taste.[31]

[30] *Le Figaro*, 18 December 1903. "l'interpretation [était] alerte, légère, tendre, pathétique ou dramatique, totalement exempte de l'insupportable accent de solennité dont on aloudit, d'ordinaire, ce chef-d'œuvre, sous prétexte de le mieux honorer." This passage is also briefly discussed in relationship to Fauré's thoughts on German music in Nicole Labelle, "Gabriel Fauré: Music Critic for *Le Figaro*," in *Regarding Fauré*, ed. and trans. Tom Gordon (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1999), 24.

[31] *Le Figaro*, 29 October 1904. "L'Opéra reprenait hier soir *Don Juan*, c'est-à-dire un *Don Juan* spécial à l'Académie national de musique et qui diffère, hélas, de *Don Giovanni*...sur bien d'autre points que le remplacement d'un texte italien par un texte français, un *Don Juan* amplifié, parce qu'il était nécessaire qu'il occupât la soirée entière, et solennisé parce que, de tout temps, nous avons marqué une propension à entourer les chefs-d'œuvre d'une pompe qu'ils ne réclament point.

Here Fauré lamented the "travesties" that had been inflicted on Mozart's original score at the Opéra in particular, even going so far as to suggest that the continued mistreatment of Mozart at the national opera theater was a bad reflection on French musical taste as a whole. A week later, the critic found the production at the Opéra-Comique to be only a marginal improvement, but only because of the smaller size of the hall. [32] The main criticism for Fauré still seems to have been the "French" adaptation of Mozart's opera, a problem that could only be rectified by reverting entirely back to the original, "authentic" version.

Fauré's staunch public position on the necessity for restoring "Classical" Mozart is not surprising. As several scholars have pointed out, Fauré's career was to a large extent shaped by the understanding and advocacy of eighteenth-century music. Fauré attended the École Niedermeyer, which required extensive study of the classics, and as Director of the Conservatoire he instituted reforms that mandated similar study.[33] As a composer, Fauré was heavily influenced by eighteenth-century musical techniques, and,

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Énumérer les travestissements qu'a subis le *Don Giovanni* de Mozart serait trop long. Rechercher les causes multiples de ces travestissements aboutirait à des conclusions peu flatteuses pour notre goût."

[32] *Le Figaro,* 6 November 1904. Fauré complained that: "Neither is this *Don Juan* [at the Opéra-Comique] the *Don Giovanni* that only perfect Italian singers can restore to us. However, thanks to a stage with limited proportions that permits one to impress on the action a less solemn allure, thanks to a hall where the music can spread out without losing its charm or emotion, the Opéra-Comique's *Don Juan* comes appreciably closer to Mozart's original work than the Opéra's *Don Juan*…." ["Ce *Don Juan* n'est pas non plus le *Don Giovanni* que, seuls, de parfaits chanteurs italiens pourraient nous restituer. Cependant, à la faveur d'une scène de proportions restreintes et qui permet d'imprimer à l'action une allure moins solennelle, à la faveur d'une salle où la musique se répand sans rien perdre de son charme ne de son émotion, le *Don Juan* de l'Opéra-Comique se rapproche plus sensiblement de l'œuvre primitive de Mozart que le *Don Juan* de l'Opéra…."]

[33] For a brief discussion of the influence of Fauré's education at the École Niedermeyer and his musical dependence on musical traditions, see Carlo Caballero, *Fauré and French Musical Aesthetics* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 71–75. On Fauré's reforms as Director of the Conservatoire, see Gail Hilson Woldu, "Gabriel Fauré as Director of the Conservatoire National de Musique et de Declamation, 1905–1920" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1983).

indeed, an aesthetic ideology of classicism. His settings of Verlaine's "Fêtes galantes" reflect the classical idyll as depicted by the painter Jean-Antoine Watteau's renderings of eighteenth-century courtly life (See Fig. 2.3). Similarly, the *Masques et bergamasques* (Op. 112, 1919) included modern versions of eighteenth-century dances (minuet and gavotte), and Fauré himself described these dances as being akin to Watteau's paintings.[34] While these paintings were produced three-quarters of a century before Mozart's operas, Fauré's use of them nonetheless demonstrates his willingness to accept eighteenth-century works as artistic influences, and, consequently, to position himself as an extension of the "Classical" environment from which they emerged. At least a few others made connections between the *Masques et Bergamasques* and Mozart: Fauré reported in a letter that "Reynaldo Hahn says it [the work] is as if Mozart had *imitated* Fauré! It's a funny idea, but not in the least banal!"[35] Fauré's placement of himself as the descendent of an eighteenth-century artistic tradition—one that encompassed Mozart as well as earlier figures—created for him a situation analogous to Gounod's. But while Gounod positioned Mozart firmly as a nineteenth-century composer in order to maintain his own status as an heir to the great composer, Fauré was required to return Mozart to the eighteenth century in order to accomplish the same task. For the "(neo)Classical"

[34] Fauré was certainly not the only *fin-de-siècle* composer to be influenced by eighteenth-century dance forms, which came into vogue during this time. Debussy, Ravel, Chausson, Saint-Saëns, and d'Indy, among a myriad of others, composed works in genres like minuets, gavottes, passepieds, and so on. On the topic, see Jann Pasler, *Composing the Citizen: Music and Public Utility in Third Republic France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 501–507. See also Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept Through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1996), Chapter 1. Fauré's reference is in a letter to his wife Marie Fauré, dated 14 April 1919. Reprinted in *Gabriel Fauré: A Life in Letters*, trans. and ed. J. Barrie Jones (London: B.T. Batsford, 1988), 181.

[35] Letter to Marie Fauré, 14 April 1919. Reprinted in *Gabriel Fauré: A Life in Letters*, 181.

Fauré to connect himself with the Mozartean eighteenth century, Mozart himself had to comfortably reside in the "Classical" realm.

**Fig. 2.3: Jean-Antoine Watteau, *The French Comedians* (1721–22). The Metropolitan Museum of Art.**

Aside from Fauré, the 1904 productions received very little critical attention, and seem to have been perceived largely as a re-hashing of the 1896 double productions. *Le Ménestrel*, for example, which usually covered Mozart operas in some depth, was almost totally silent on the topic in 1904, publishing only the cast lists in brief "nouvelles" sections. Similarly, the popular music journal *Musica*, usually keen to print production stills of the famous singers, published only a brief article on famous Don Juans at the

Opéra.[36] In short, the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique were content to rely on the nineteenth-century version *Don Juan* to which audiences had become accustomed, and the critics barely took note.

Less than a decade later, however, at least the Opéra-Comique could acknowledge the need for a new, more "authentic"—or perhaps more "Classical"—interpretation of the opera. The Opéra-Comique in particular was a prime location for such change because its director, Albert Carré, was a major proponent of returning eighteenth-century opera to modern stages (and a major figure in the Gluck revival as well). In 1906, in response to a small Mozart festival organized by Hahn, the critic Jean Chantavoine opined:

> I hope above all that this demonstration [the Mozart Festival] piques the zeal of M. Albert Carré, who would benefit by replacing in his repertoire *Le Domino noir* [by Auber] with *Don Juan*, *Mignon* [by Thomas] with *Les Noces*, *Mireille* [by Gounod] with *La Flûte enchantée*, *Les Dragons de Villars* [by Maillart] with *La Flûte enchantée*, and *Fra Diavolo* [by Auber] with *Così fan tutti*….[37]

Chantavoine, in short, wanted to replace the traditional nineteenth-century repertoire of the Opéra-Comique with eighteenth-century works by Mozart. This wish was granted (to a certain extent), and in 1912—thanks to the combined efforts of Hahn and Carré—the Opéra-Comique produced a version of the opera much closer to Mozart's original. The libretto, though still in French, was retranslated by the dramatist Paul Ferrier into a form substantially closer to da Ponte's. Hahn restored the opera's recitatives (accompanied at

[36] *Musica*, November 1904.

[37] *Le Courier musical*, 15 April 1906. "Je souhaite surtout que cette démonstration pique le zèle de M. Albert Carré qui, dans son répertoire, remplacerait avec avantage le *Domino Noir* par *Don Juan*, *Mignon* par les *Noces*, *Mireille* par la *Flûte enchantée*, les *Dragons de Villars* par la *Flûte enchantée*, et *Fra Diavolo* par *Così fan tutti*…." It seems likely that Chantavoine intended this passage to replace *Les Dragons de Villars* with *The Abduction from the Seraglio* rather than listing *The Magic Flute* twice.

the piano) and original structure (two acts, rather than the five that had become traditional in France), as well as making a number of other musical alterations to further align the opera with Mozart's score.[38] This production was a major milestone in the reception of the opera in the *fin de siècle*, and the artistic issues at stake were enormous: could modern critics and audiences, so used to the Romantic vision of the opera and its composer, understand and appreciate an "eighteenth-century" *Don Juan*? Some critics, notably Arthur Pougin in *Le Ménestrel*, were skeptical about the new production, particularly the newly restored finale:

> among the innovations—or restitutions, if you wish—there is one that I do not support at all: it consists of, after Don Juan's *foudroiement*, all the characters of the drama returning to the stage, who had disappeared for a long time, and they suddenly sing a final ensemble that has nothing to do with a duly completed plot. This recalls the "couplet au public" that once served as a sort of moral in old vaudevilles, and, not to upset the memory of da Ponte and Mozart, it is perfectly ridiculous from a dramatic point of view. Never would Molière have had such a burlesque idea.[39]

For Pougin, the restoration (a term he only grudgingly applies) of the final scene renders the opera too antiquated, leaving it ill-equipped dramatically to support comparison with

[38] A fairly detailed list of Hahn's changes to Mozart appeared in the *nouvelles* of *Le Ménestrel*, 13 April 1912. A brief notice in the *Journal des débats* (1 May 1912) reveals the novelty of Hahn's conception:"Last night the Opéra-Comique held the dress rehearsal of Mozart's *Don Juan* as the composer wrote it. M. Reynaldo Hahn directed the orchestra; the recitatives were accompanied at the piano. Finally, the work ended after the disappearance of Don Juan; all the characters appeared on stage, searching for Don Juan and expressing their joy at the punishment that he received." ["Le théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique a donné hier la répétition générale du *Don Juan* de Mozart tel que le compositeur l'avait écrit. M. Reynaldo Hahn a dirigé l'orchestre; les récitatifs ont été accompagnés au piano. Enfin la pièce se termine plus sur la disparition de Don Juan ; tous les personnages apparaissent sur la scène, cherchant Don Juan et exprimant leur joie du châtiment qu'il a reçu."]

[39] *Le Ménestrel*, 4 May 1912. "parmi les innovations—ou les restitutions, comme on voudra—il en est une dont je ne suis nullement partisan : c'est celle qui consiste, après la foudroiement de Don Juan, à faire revenir sur la scène tous les personnages du drame, qui depuis longtemps ont disparu, et à leur faire entonner un ensemble final qui n'a que faire avec une action dûment terminée. Cela rappelle le "couplet au public" qui, jadis, servait en quelque sorte de moralité dans les anciens vaudevilles, et, n'en déplaise à la mémoire de D'Aponte [*sic*] et de Mozart, cela est parfaitement ridicule au point de vue scénique. Jamais Molière n'aurait eu une idée aussi burlesque."

modern operas. Furthermore, Pougin unfavorably compares *Don Giovanni* to Molière, implicitly suggesting that Mozart's work was inferior to the French tradition.

The influential Wagnerian and Symbolist author Téodor de Wyzewa—who also wrote a monumental Mozart biography—penned a particularly enlightening review of the 1912 production in *La Revue musicale S.I.M.*, revealing the extent to which many attitudes towards Mozart changed after the turn of the century:

> There was, in this new reprise of *Don Juan*, something touching and, in truth, very beautiful, which I really believe struck everyone just as it did me. Unanimously, we admire M. Albert Carré for having agreed to try, out on the stage of the Opéra-Comique, a faithful resurrection of Mozart's work; and we have great affection for M. Hahn himself for all that he has spent for science, talent, love, and service for an entirely impartial cause.
>
> Not, however, that this eminent connoisseur and "amateur" of Mozart has succeeded as perfectly as he might have wanted in giving us the authentic and original score of *Don Juan*, as it was heard by the citizens of Prague, the night of 29 October 1787. He was forced, for example, to entrust to the sure and skillful voice of Mlle Génevieve Vix, in the role of Donna Elvira, in addition to the aria in D composed for Prague, another aria, in E-flat, written for the Vienna opera house in 1788; whereas, on the other hand, we have been deprived, after the sextet of the second act, of a large aria for Leporello that incontestably appeared in the original, the surprising scope and comic grandiloquence of which add a very valuable element to the musical definition of Don Juan's cowardly and cheeky companion. Still in the same vein, a "Mozartian" of "strict observance" would regret that, in one of the first scenes of the first finale, one did not consider a manifest intention of the composer. When, in effect, Leporello, flabbergasted by his master, invites the masked trio to take part in the ball, this invitation was not made across a railing, as we have seen at the Opéra-Comique, but through a window, the momentary opening of which would let us hear the first echoes of the minuet, danced inside the palace. The intervention of this minuet in the accompaniment at this moment of the finale, remains inexplicable for us without the stage business of the open window.
>
> But what are these slight imperfections in comparison to the enormous number of new things—or rather happily renewed after the original score—that we see thanks to the providential "Mozartian" collaboration of MM. R. Hahn and Albert Carré? An orchestra reduced to its natural proportions, the last scenes of the second finale restored to life after more than a century of being completely abandoned—there is every

reason to believe that these scenes were even suppressed since the first night, at the theater in Prague—the original division into two acts scrupulously maintained (at least in the program and in theory), and the installation of three small "real" orchestras in the middle of the dancers, in the first finale: many true victories have been won over a tradition that is most often foolish, without counting twenty other victories, less apparent, perhaps, but still better for deliciously touching every concerned soul with the pure and subtle perfume of Mozart's genius. I will add that, to say nothing of the excellent behavior of the orchestra under the personal direction of M. Hahn, the interpretation of the roles attests to a considerable progress from those we have been accustomed to at the same theater in the past. …

If someone asked me now for my opinion on the practical results and the future possibilities for this admirable reprise of *Don Juan*, I would express the most pessimistic prognosis. Because I am all but certain that, once again, Mozart's masterwork is going to quickly disappear from the stage of the Opéra-Comique—just as *La Flûte enchantée* did last year. Again, the public will soon grow tired of *Don Juan*, which will have the effect of confirming the directors' belief—absolutely erroneous—that life is no longer possible, *chez nous* [in France], for Mozart's dramatic genius. And why? Because *Don Juan*, with all its immortal beauty, is a piece that is more than a century old, and, as such, cannot be presented to us in the same fashion as a piece written for us today. When the directors of the Théâtre-Français decide to revive a masterwork by Molière…no one has the idea to offer this classic comedy with a luxury of staging that would oblige it to not offer anything else for the whole evening. …

Here is what our musical-theater directors seem not to want to understand, to the great detriment of their own efforts and of the glory of the old masters! It is thus that *Don Juan*, on the poster, only consists of two acts: in reality, it condemns us to suffer, in addition to one regular entr'acte, a half-dozen slightly shorter entr'actes, but, all the same, quite boring for listeners who are not encouraged to be patient by the curiosity to discover what is going to come afterwards in the plot. The first finale, for example, finds itself cut after the "masked trio," in a way that alters its musical unity. In the second act, we have to wait ten minutes for the little "cemetery duet" then another ten minutes for Donna Anna's aria—so unfortunate from a dramatic point of view, one must admit!—and, after this aria, ten more minutes of waiting before being admitted to the pleasure of the second finale. And that one should not allege that these small breaks are not true "entr'actes" because one is not invited to move from one's place! I affirm, on the contrary, that this obligation to wait in place is for us, unconsciously, more annoying still than an entr'acte where we can exchange our impressions with our friends. I have seen this at the performance: all around me, from the middle of the second act, listeners began by rereading their programs—during one or the other of these

disastrous breaks—and then, mechanically, tired of waiting, they take their hats and return to their homes. […][40]

[40] *La Revue musicale S.I.M.*, 15 May 1912. "Il y a eu, dans cette nouvelle reprise de *Don Juan*, quelque chose de touchant et en vérité de très beau, dont je crois bien que tout le monde a été frappé comme moi. Unanimement, nous admirions M. Albert Carré d'avoir consenti à ce que M. Reynaldo Hahn essayât ainsi, sur la scène de l'Opéra-Comique, une fidèle résurrection de l'œuvre de Mozart ; et nous savions un gré infini à M. Hahn lui-même de tout ce qu'il avait dépensé de science, et de talent, et d'amour, du service d'une cause artistique toute désintéressée.

Non pas, cependant, que cet éminent connaisseur et "amateur" de Mozart eût réussi à nous rendre aussi parfaitement qu'il l'aurait voulu la partition authentique et originale de *Don Juan*, telle que l'ont entendue les habitants de Prague, le soir du 29 octobre 1787. Force lui a été, par exemple, de confier à la sûre et savante voix de Mlle Génevieve Vix, dans son rôle de Dona Elvire, en plus de l'air en *ré* composé pour Prague, un autre air, en *mi-bémol*, écrit pour l'Opéra de Vienne en 1788 ; tandis que d'autre part nous avons été privé, après *le Sextuor* du second acte, d'un grand air de Leporello qui appartient incontestablement à la version primitive, et dont l'étonnante ampleur et emphase comique ajoute un élément des plus précieux à la définition musicale du peureux et effronté compagnon de Don Juan. Pareillement encore un "mozartien" de la "stricte observance" serait homme à regretter que, dans l'une des premières scènes du premier finale, l'on n'eût pas tenu compte d'une intention manifeste du compositeur. Lorsque, en effet, Leporello, soufflé par son maître, invite les trois masques à prendre leur part du bal, cette invitation ne devrait pas être faite à travers une grille, comme nous le voyons à l'Opéra-Comique, mais bien à travers une fenêtre, dont l'ouverture momentanée nous laisserait entendre les premiers échos du menuet, dansé à l'intérieur du palais. L'intervention de ce menuet dans l'accompagnement, à ce moment du finale, nous reste inexplicablement sans ce jeu de scène de la fenêtre ouverte.

Mais que sont ces menues imperfections en regard de la masse énorme de choses nouvelles, — ou plutôt heureusement renouvelées d'après la partition originale, — dont nous voici redevable à la providentielle collaboration "mozartienne" de MM. R. Hahn et Albert Carré ? Un orchestre réduit à ses proportions naturelles, les dernières scènes du second finale rappelées à la vie après plus d'un siècle de complet abandon, — tout porte à croire que ces scènes avaient même été supprimés dès le premier soir, au théâtre de Prague, — la division primitive en deux actes scrupuleusement conservée (tout au moins sur le programme et en théorie), et l'installation de trois petits orchestres "reels" au au milieu des danseurs, dans le premier finale : autant de véritables victoires remportées désormais sur une tradition le plus souvent imbécile, sans compter vingt autres victoires moins apparentes, peut-être, mais mieux faites encore pour émouvoir délicieusement toute âme qui se soucie de goûter le pur et subtil parfum du génie de Mozart. A quoi j'ajouterai que, pour ne rien dire de l'excellente tenue de l'orchestre sous la direction personnelle de M. Hahn, l'interprétation des rôles atteste un progrès considérable sur celles où le même théâtre nous avait naguère habitués. …

Que si maintenant l'on me demandait mon opinion sur les résultats pratiques et les probabilités d'avenir de cette admirable reprise de *Don Juan*, j'aurais à émettre le pronostic le plus pessimiste. Car je suis à peu près certain que, cette fois encore, le chef-d'œuvre de Mozart disparaîtra bientôt de la scène de l'Opéra-Comique, — tout de même qu'en a disparu, l'année dernière, la *Flûte enchantée*. De nouveau, le public ne tardera pas à se lasser de *Don Juan*, ce qui achèvera de confirmer les directeurs dans la croyance, — absolument erronée, — qu'il n'y a plus de vie possible, chez nous, pour la génie dramatique de Mozart. Et pourquoi ? Parce que *Don Juan*, avec toute sa beauté immortelle, est une pièce vieille de plus d'un siècle, et qui, cela étant, ne saurait nous être présentée de la même façon qu'une pièce écrite aujourd'hui pour nous. Lorsque la direction du Théâtre-Français s'avise de ressusciter un chef-d'œuvre de Molière, tel que *Georges Dandin* ou le *Médecin malgré lui*, l'idée ne lui viendrait pas d'offrir cette comédie classique avec un luxe de mise en scène qui l'obligerait à ne pas donner autre chose, durant la soirée. …

Voilà ce que nos directeurs de théâtres musicaux semblent ne pas vouloir comprendre, au grand détriment de leurs propres efforts et de la gloire des maîtres anciens ! C'est ainsi que *Don Juan*, sur l'affiche, ne comporte que deux actes : en réalité, il nous condamne à subir, en plus du grand entracte régulier, une demi-douzaine d'entractes un peu plus courts, mais, tout de même, bien ennuyeux pour des auditeurs qui ne sont pas encouragés à la patience par la curiosité de découvrir ce qui va ensuite leur être montré sur la scène. Le premier finale, par exemple se trouve coupé, après le *trio des masques*, d'une façon qui en altère l'unité musicale. Au second acte, nous devons attendre dix minutes le petit *duo du cimetière*,

Wyzewa clearly appreciated the Opéra-Comique's aspirations towards "authenticity," and contends that his fellow audience members felt the same way (though he cannot help pointing out the numerous ways in which the production deviated from Mozart's Prague and Viennese versions of the opera). In many ways, for Wyzewa and others of a similar mindset, this was a perfect production—reasonably authentic, and with excellent singers and musicians. Yet he felt sure that the production would quickly run its course and be removed from the stage, because it was an eighteenth-century work being forced into the mold of a nineteenth-century (or perhaps early twentieth-century) opera. In sharp contrast to the perspectives on the "divine Mozart" and his (French) opera *Don Juan* from the 1870s and 1880s, Wyzewa had the audacity to find the work itself too long and to allege that audiences were bored to tears in their seats at a performance of "notre *Don Juan*."

The exact problem here is unclear. Wyzewa, and Fauré a decade earlier, contended that the main issue is the aggrandized Romantic version of Mozart's opera displayed on an enormous stage, being forced to fill a larger space and a longer period of time than it was originally intended to. In that case, more "authentic" productions, like Hahn's in 1912, should have rectified the trouble. On the other hand, it may be that the problem lay deeper. Once (largely) stripped of its nineteenth-century Romantic veneer, perhaps *Don Juan* was simply a less appealing opera to many Parisian audience members, more accustomed to Massenet than Mozart. And once the illusion of

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puis de nouveau dix minutes l'air, — si fâcheux au point de vue dramatique, il faut bien l'avouer ! — de Dona Anna ; et, après cet air, dix minutes encore d'attente avant d'être admis à la jouissance du second finale. Et que l'on n'allègue pas que ces petits arrêts ne sont pas de véritables 'entractes,' parce que l'on est invité à ne pas bouger de sa place ! J'affirme, au contraire, que cet obligation d'attendre sur place est pour nous, inconsciemment, plus agaçante encore qu'un entracte où nous pouvons échanger nos impressions avec des amis. Je l'ai bien vu à la répétition générale : tout autour de moi, à partir du milieu du second acte, des auditeurs commençaient par relire leurs programmes, — durant l'un ou l'autre de ces désastreux arrêts, — et puis, machinalement, fatigués d'attendre, ils prenaient leur chapeau et s'en allaient chez soi. […]"

universality that had been attached to *Don Juan* was dispelled, audiences and critics were forced to situate the work in its geographical and chronological location, revealing an eighteenth-century, and more importantly, German composer. For the Wagnerian Wyzewa, German origins were less of a concern, but for other more nationalist figures, the concept of a German Mozart was difficult to absorb. In this section, I have explored the transition in Mozart's historical position, from the commonly held perception of his works as products of the nineteenth-century—or as timeless and "immortal"—to viewing them through a historical lens, as eighteenth-century creations. This shift is also born out in the extent to which Mozart's nationality was altered during this time period, when critics repositioned him from a "universal" or even, by implication, "French" composer to an Austro-German one.

**Cosmopolitanism vs. Nationalism: Mozart and Politics**

Over the course of the nineteenth century, Mozart came to be regarded as the quintessential cosmopolitan composer. The European tours undertaken by the Mozart family when Wolfgang was a child were always a major topic of French critics (although they often emphasized—sometimes disproportionately—the stops in Paris). Furthermore, at least some critics—most prominently François-Joseph Fétis— found in Mozart's style a synthesis of German, Italian, and French national styles, ultimately creating "a new and universal musical language," in Katharine Ellis's words.[41] This cosmopolitan reputation served Mozart well in Paris throughout most of the nineteenth century. The city itself was

[41] Katharine Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France:* La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris, *1834–1880* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 90.

a highly international environment during that time, a feature that virtually defined its character.[42] This hospitable atmosphere was reflected on the operatic stages of Paris, as well. Italian composers like Gioacchino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini, Gaetano Donizetti, and Giuseppi Verdi were welcomed at the Opéra with (mostly) open arms, and their works were extremely popular for much of the century.[43] Likewise, the operas of the German Carl Maria von Weber were well received (though they were often performed in French adaptations by Castil-Blaze), and performances continued through the 1860s.[44] Even the failure of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in 1861 had less to do with the composer's nationality than with his refusal to capitulate to French artistic preferences.[45] In such an environment, it is little wonder that the Austrian Mozart's works were featured so prominently on Parisian opera stages. Hospitality towards foreigners was a fundamental

[42] The Polish émigré Charles Forster, for example, wrote of the city in 1848 that "there is no country in the world where a foreigner, an émigré, will find hearts that are warmer or more compassionate to his suffering. …as soon as he touches French soil, he becomes, as it were, a citizen of the country…. No one demands of him an accounting of his opinions or his nationality. He is an exile and that is enough. And if he does not have everyone's sympathy, he at least enjoys the esteem that is accorded to genuine convictions and for which he suffers. In this respect, as in its most chivalrous assistance, France will always be the purest, most noble model for the universe." Charles Forster, *Quinze ans à Paris (1832–1848) : Paris et les Parisiens*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1848), 1 : 9–10. Quoted (in English) in Lloyd S. Kramer, *Threshold of a New World: Intellectuals and the Exile Experience in Paris, 1830–1848* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 49.

[43] On the popularity and importance of Italian opera in nineteenth-century Paris see, for example: Benjamin Walton, *Rossini in Restoration Paris: The Sound of Modern Life* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); James Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996); Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whitall (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); and Andreas Giger, *Verdi and the French Aesthetic: Verse, Stanza, and Melody in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[44] On Weber's reception in the mid-century, see Katharine Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France*, 127–30.

[45] On the Parisian *Tannhäuser* scandal, see Carolyn Abbate, "The Parisian 'Vénus' and the 'Paris' '*Tannhäuser*,' " *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 36 (1983): 73–123; and Annegret Fauser, "'Cette musique sans tradition': Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and its French Critics," in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914,* ed. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 228–55.

aspect of Parisian culture, and one on which the French prided themselves highly. Consequently, producing works by foreign composers became an ironic type of nationalism, where the magnanimity and taste of the French people was celebrated.

After 1870, however, Paris's spirit of cosmopolitanism began to evaporate. Only a society that was secure in its position of cultural dominance—as France was until the Franco-Prussian War—could afford to be so accommodating to foreign artists. The War severely compromised that secure position, and consequently the French sought reaffirmation of their cultural glory in specifically French artists, leaving little room left for hospitality to foreign artists, including Mozart.[46] Philippe Blay, for example, examined a push in the 1890s for the Opéra-Comique to become an "entirely French" theater, which led to the rejection of the foreign works that had dominated the repertoire there for much of the nineteenth century.[47] But such a change in perspective was not immediate, nor was it complete. Despite the rampant musical nationalism that governed many aspects of French musical life at the *fin de siècle*, Wagner's music (after an initial ban in the concert halls after the war) became increasingly popular with opera audiences. Steven Huebner pointed out the tension surrounding performances of Wagner's operas, as "perceptions that his art encapsulated the essence of the German nation coexisted, often within the same person, with the enormous appeal of his music…."[48] This same tension, though less publicly debated, governed the reception of Mozart's operas during this time,

[46] Anselm Gerhard has pointed out that "the cosmopolitan character of the Paris Opéra, and grand opéra as a genre, was already threatened in the 1850s and '60s; then, with Prussia's defeat of France in 1871, all universalist trends in Parisian cultural life came to an abrupt halt, and the 'capital city of the nineteenth century' began its slow decline toward a poorly disguised provincialism." Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 394.

[47] Philippe Blay, "Un Théâtre français, tout à fait français, ou un débat fin-de-siècle sur l'Opéra-Comique," *Revue de musicologie* 81 (2001): 105–44.

[48] Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the* fin de siècle, 12.

when his Austro-German identity was brought into conflict with the public interest in—and the critical respect for—his music.

The primary difficulty lay in the fact that Mozart had spent little time in France (at least as an adult) and thus his stage works were neither in French nor written with a French audience in mind. Unlike Gluck, who had adapted to French musical traditions, Mozart had composed in a more international language. This difference made it difficult, to successfully claim him as a "French" composer in the increasingly nationalist climate emerging in the years leading up to 1900. Some critics, however, made the attempt: Félix Clement, for example, in his *Histoire de la musique*, acknowledged the issue of Mozart's nationality, but nonetheless made an attempt to rescue Mozart for France:

> Gluck naturalized himself as a French composer. He separated himself from the German symphonists and the Italian melodists. Mozart never made a single concession to our taste. We have admired and loved him nevertheless, because of the French qualities of his heart, of his effusive nature, of the limpid clarity of his style and of his ideas, and finally because of the supreme beauty of his genius. At such a height, borders are erased. I will go farther: the divine Mozart, dethroned by the sectarians of the new German school, will retain his altar in France.[49]

Although Mozart the man made no efforts to assimilate in France either culturally or musically, in this construction of French musical identity his music nonetheless possessed qualities that rendered it essentially French for some critics. Furthermore, Clément emphasized that in modern times, France—in contrast to Germany—showed Mozart the respect that his genius deserved. There was another, less explicit, assumption underlying

[49] Félix Clément, *Histoire de la musique depuis les temps anciens jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris : Hachette, 1885), 767–68. "Gluck s'est naturalisé compositeur français. Il s'est séparé des symphonistes allemands et des mélodistes italiens. Mozart n'a jamais fait aucune concession à notre goût. Nous l'avons admiré et aimé néanmoins, à cause des qualités françaises de son cœur, de sa nature expansive, de la clarté limpide de son style et de ses idées, et enfin à cause de la beauté souveraine de son génie. A une telle hauteur, les frontières s'effacent. Je dirai plus : le divin Mozart, détrôné par les sectaires de la nouvelle école allemand, conservera chez nous ses autels."

Clément's representations of Mozart; the critic seems to imply that the very fact that Mozart's music is beautiful—and, above all, because the composer was a genius—in some way made him into a French figure. This flawed logic would certainly be convenient for aggrandizing French musical styles: French music is beautiful, therefore any composer who composes beautiful music must necessarily be in some fundamental way French, regardless of geographical boundaries.

This refusal to acknowledge Mozart's foreign origins colored the writings of other critics, as well. The composer Gabriel Pierné, for example, inexplicably included Mozart in a list of French (or adopted French) composers that should be included in the Operatic Museum: "The Opéra-Comique should become a sort of museum for the operatic repertoire…it should even be reasonable to extend it by drawing more than we have thus far on works by Lully, Rameau, Gluck, Mozart, Méhul, Grétry."[50] The implication is clear: Mozart is a part of this French pantheon of composers, and his music belongs at the "eminently French" Opéra-Comique. Nowhere does Pierné acknowledge that Mozart was not French, or that he composed no operas for France.

After 1900, as nationalist tensions reached a fevered pitch, this perspective became increasingly rare. But even critics who acknowledged Mozart's Germanic identity lamented the composer's lost "French" potential. In a 1906 article on the subject of Mozart in France, Henri de Curzon placed all blame for Mozart's distaste for France on the shoulders of the author Melchior Grimm:

[50] *Le Figaro*, 1 February 1898. "L'Opéra-Comique devrait être une sorte de musée du répertoire lyrique, … il serait même convenable de l'augmenter en puisant plus qu'on ne l'a fait dans les œuvres de Lulli, Rameau, Gluck, Mozart, Méhul, Grétry."

> There are those types of *faux bonshommes* who must be unmasked: Melchior Grimm, in a fit of pique that one imagines to be his habit, played in Mozart's career, from our point of view at least, the most nefarious role. It is thanks to him that Mozart did not become, like Gluck, a *French composer*.
>
> …
>
> Ah! it is first that Mozart was no longer a phenomenon to put on display for the curious, for the great glory of Grimm, and to whom one could ask to place the bass under an amateur minuet! He was nothing more than a musician, and what musician? Original, independent, and finally German… And yet Grimm held firm for Italian music, second reason. Grimm, exasperated by Gluck's success, bitter from seeing his musical authority badly beaten, was in a spiritual excitation without bounds at the moment when Mozart fell into his arms. And he would sustain another German composer? *A d'autres*!
>
> If Mozart had still been docile in his hands! But no. He certainly had the talent to instill in the young man his hatred, or his disdain for the French taste, of the French public, of French music—and the defiance, or the foolishness, that Mozart demonstrated on the subject in his letters, which are attributable to Grimm's malicious spirit.
>
> … It is for us that he would have written his scores whose subjects have already appeared to us: *Les Noces de Figaro* and *Don Juan*, and he would have added many others, with our French librettos, so much "according to his spirit." [51]

This argument saves Mozart from the accusation of being entirely anti-French. He was, instead, corrupted by Grimm's malicious German influence. Furthermore, Curzon

[51] *Musica*, April 1906. "Il est des types de *faux bonshommes* qu'on ne saurait trop démasquer : Melchior Grimm, en dépit de ce qu'on imagine d'habitude, a joué sur la carrière de Mozart, à notre point de vue tout au moins, le rôle le plus néfaste. C'est grâce à lui que Mozart n'est pas devenu, comme Gluck, un *compositeur français.*

…

Ah ! c'est d'abord que Mozart n'était plus un phénomène à révéler aux curieux, pour le plus grand gloire de Grimm, et à qui on pouvait demander de mettre la basse sous un menuet d'amateur ! Ce n'était plus qu'un musicien, et quel musicien ? Original, indépendant, allemand enfin… Or, Grimm tenait pour la musique italienne, seconde raison. Grimm, exaspéré par le succès de Gluck, aigri de voir son autorité musicale battue en brèche, était dans une excitation d'esprit sans bornes, au moment où Mozart lui tomba sur les bras. Et il irait soutenir un autre compositeur allemand ? A d'autres !

Si encore Mozart eût été docile entre ses mains ! Mais point. Il avait bien eu le talent d'inculquer au jeune homme sa haine ou son dédain du goût français, du public français, de la musique française, — et la défiance, ou la sottise, dont Mozart fait preuve à ce sujet dans ses lettres, sont encore imputables à ce méchant esprit de Grimm.

…C'est pour nous qu'il aurait écrit ces partitions dont le sujet déjà nous appartient : *Les Noces de Figaro* et *Don Juan*, et il en eût ajouté bien d'autres, avec nos livrets français si bien 'selon son esprit.'"

emphasizes that French librettos were "according to [Mozart's] spirit," reaffirming that the composer somehow had a natural connection to French musical traditions.

Even Debussy, normally opposed staunchly to all things German (except Bach)—including the adopted Frenchman Gluck—had positive things to say about Mozart, reflecting on his "good taste" (a high compliment from Debussy) as late as 1913.[52] By this time, the effort to adopt Mozart as a French composer had failed—he was inextricably German. But later in the same year, in an article on modern directions in French music, Debussy could not help but express regret that Mozart was lost to France and its composers: "What a pity Mozart wasn't French. He would really have been worth imitating!"[53]

**Mozart as Raphael, or, A Feminine Mozart**

The late nineteenth-century attempt to position Mozart as an artist who could be adopted as "French" not by any biographical evidence (like Gluck, for example) but rather by the inherent "Frenchness" of his works, while unusual, was not entirely unique in French history. Mozart, in fact, was frequently compared to the painter Raphael, who had been for centuries adopted as a French artist despite his spending no time in France.[54] In the early nineteenth century Raphael assumed a position of particular importance in French society, as his works formed the centerpiece of the Musée Napoléon, established in 1803.

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[52] *La Revue musicale S.I.M.*, 15 February 1913. Reprinted in *Debussy on Music: The Critical Writings of the Great French Composer Claude Debussy*, ed. François Lesure and Richard Langham Smith, trans. Richard Langham Smith (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 276–80.

[53] *La Revue musicale S.I.M.*, 1 November 1913. Reprinted in *Debussy on Music*, 295–98. Quotation from 298.

[54] On Raphael's adoption as a French figure, see Martin Rosenberg, *Raphael and France: The Artist as Paradigm and Symbol* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

Much of his art was looted from its native Italy (and some from Spain) and taken to Paris because, the argument ran, "the French were more willing and able to preserve these masterpieces than their present owners."[55] Only the French, it would seem, could truly appreciate the genius of Raphael, and so they essentially adopted him—an analogous situation to Mozart's later in the century.

As early as 1855, Henri Blaze de Bury pointed to a comment by Lorenzo da Ponte, hailing Mozart as the return of Raphael.[56] In the *fin de siècle*, such references were more frequent; recall d'Udine's evocation of Raphael, for example, in which the critic opined that "Mozart passed, in the opinion of the dilettantes, as the ruling genius of music, and, like Raphael in painting, his name became almost dogmatically a synonym for perfection, grace, an unsurpassable ideal…."[57] In 1873, Gustave Choquet, in his *Histoire de la musique dramatique en France*, wrote that:

> Mozart drove musical comedy to its highest degree of perfection in *Le Nozze de Figaro*; in writing *Die Zauberflöte*, he created the *drame fantastique*, and in composing *Don Giovanni* he delved into the depths of the supernatural world and opened the door to opera for Romanticism. These last three scores are those in which the Raphael of music delivered to us the secrets of his reverent, melancholy, and tender soul.[58]

[55] Rosenberg, *Raphael and France*, 149.

[56] Blaze de Bury was reviewing the 1855 production of *La Flûte enchantée* at the Théâtre Lyrique. The passage is reprinted in *Musiciens du passé, du présent et de l'avenir* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1880), 64.

[57] *Les Arts de la vie*, January 1904. "Mozart passa, dans l'opinion des dilettantes, pour le génie souverain de la musique, et, comme celui de Raphaël en peinture, son nom devint presque dogmatiquement synonyme de perfection, de grâce et d'idéal inégalables…."

[58] Gustave Choquet, *Histoire de la musique dramatique en France depuis ses origines jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Didot, 1873), 173. "Mozart a conduit la comédie musicale à son plus haut degré de perfection dans *le Nozze de Figaro* ; en écrivant *la Flûte enchantée*, il a créé le drame fantastique, et en composant *Don Giovanni* il a sondé les profondeurs du monde surnaturel et ouvert au romanticisme la porte de l'opéra. Ces trois dernières partitions sont celle où le Raphaël de la musique nous a livré les secrets de son âme pieuse, mélancolique et tendre."

In his biography of Mozart, Camille Bellaigue also emphasized this connection:

> It is the secret of the great idealists, that of the composer of *Don Juan* as well as that of the painter of *Héliodore* and of *la Messe de Bolsène* [both by Raphael], to set aside until the grandiose pages, a sanctuary, like a familiar corner of intimate life, to the most modest, the most humble reality.[59]

More succinctly, Bellaigue opined that, "if the figures of Raphael could sing, they would sing Mozart's melodies."[60] By linking him to Raphael, the adopted French artist, critics subtly tied Mozart to French artistic culture, an important step in maintaining the composer in the French operatic canon during an increasingly nationalist time.

An 1899 collection of poems by the Marquis de Ségur (who dedicated one poem to Charles Gounod) featured a poem entitled "Raphaël et Mozart":

| | |
|---|---|
| Quand Mozart, désertant la terre,<br>Montait radieux vers le ciel,<br>L'âme heureuse de Raphaël<br>Vint à l'encontre de son frère. | When Mozart, abandoning the earth<br>Climbed, radiant, towards Heaven,<br>The happy soul of Raphael<br>Came towards his brother's. |
| Pareil à l'enfant qui croit voir<br>Dans l'onde pure son visage,<br>Chacun d'eux crut voir son image<br>En l'autre, comme en un miroir. | Like the child who believes he sees<br>His face in the pure waters,<br>Each of them believed he saw his face<br>In the other, as in a mirror. |
| Ils mêlèrent en un sourire<br>Leurs cœurs et se donnant la main,<br>Vers le paradis sans rien dire<br>Ils poursuivirent leur chemin. | They melded in a smile<br>Their hearts and giving each other their hands<br>Towards Paradise, without saying anything,<br>They followed their path. |

[59] Camille Bellaigue, *Mozart* (Paris: Laurens, 1906), 104. "C'est le secret des grands idéalistes, celui du musicien de *Don Juan* aussi bien que du peintre de l'*Héliodore* et de la *Messe de Bolsène* [both by Raphael], de réserver ainsi jusque dans les pages grandioses, un asile et comme un coin familier à la vie intime, à la plus modeste, à la plus humble réalité."

[60] Bellaigue, *Mozart*, 94.

| | |
|---|---|
| Et quand leurs deux âmes jumelles | And when their twin souls |
| Entrèrent au divin séjour, | Entered the divine sojourn, |
| Pourtant des grâces immortelles, | Even by the immortal graces |
| Rayonnantes du même amour, | Radiated with the same love, |
| | |
| Le chœur des célestes louanges | The chorus of celestial praise |
| Résonna plus harmonieux, | Resounded more harmoniously, |
| Comme si de nouveaux archanges | As if new archangels |
| Venaient d'éclore dans les cieux.[61] | Had just been born in the heavens. |

Here Mozart and Raphael are connected by some essential feature of their character and their art. But the poet never reveals precisely what this unifying characteristic is—as if the similarity is too obvious to merit comment. Instead, they are merely identified as "twin souls," implying that any labels of greatness that can be attached to one could be equally applied to the other.

Thankfully, other critics were more explicit; for them, the primary point of comparison was the level of "grace" that both artists had been able to achieve. Bellaigue again provides some clarity:

> The genius of Mozart is at once ideal and familiar, superior and approachable, without a single shock, or even a strain, resulting from this encounter. He arrives at the sublime sometimes by grandeur, sometimes—even more often—by grace. And I do not know others besides the Greeks, or Raphael after them, who were able to achieve sublimity by this latter path.[62]

Compare this passage with Eugène Delacroix's assessment of Raphael in 1830:

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[61] Marquis de Ségur, *Œuvres poétiques* (Paris: Retaux, 1899), 196–97.

[62] Bellaigue, *Mozart*, 101. "Le génie de Mozart est à la fois idéal et familier, supérieur et prochain, sans que jamais un choc, ou même un froissement, résulte de cette rencontre. Il arrive au sublime tantôt par la grandeur, tantôt—plus souvent même—par la grâce. Et je ne sais que les Grecs, et Raphaël après eux, qui sachent y atteindre par ce dernier chemin."

> [Raphael] alone has carried to the highest degree those qualities which are the most captivating and which exert the most influence on men: an irresistible charm in his style, and a truly divine grace, which breathes throughout all his works, and masks the defects and makes us excuse all his excesses.[63]

Both critics focus on the idea that Mozart and Raphael, respectively, approached sublimity through the charm and grace of their works.

In an article on the Classical symphony, the critic Émile Michel offered a similar concrete explanation of the constant comparison between the two figures:

> Many times he [Mozart] has already been compared to Raphael, and if, because of the evident similarities between their genius and their destinies, the comparison presents itself to the spirit, the recent critical works on the one or the other have only confirmed the numerous analogies that have been remarked upon. Not only, in effect, was their calling marked by clear enough indications, but, both sons of artists, they found from their cradle an intelligent direction from which their powers of assimilation apparently allowed them to continually benefit. Through the most diverse and happiest influences combined, they each retained all that originality, that taste, that sense of beauty and proportion, that fecundity of inexhaustible invention, that rare mélange of elegance and force, of knowledge and inspiration, that flexibility and that universality of abilities that we admire in them and that allowed them to excel in every branch of their art.[64]

[63] *La Revue de Paris*, 1830. Quoted in Rosenberg, *Raphael and France*, 179.

[64] *La Revue des deux mondes*, 1 October 1896. "Bien des fois déjà on l'a comparé à Raphaël, et si, à raison des similitudes évidentes de leur génie et de leur destinée, la comparaison se présentait d'elle-même à l'esprit, les travaux récents de la critique sur l'un et sur l'autre n'ont fait que confirmer les nombreuses analogies qu'on avait remarquées en eux. Non seulement, en effet, leur vocation a été marquée par des indices aussi manifestes, mais, fils d'artistes tous deux, ils ont trouvé, dès leur berceau, une direction intelligente dont des facultés d'assimilation semblable leur ont permis de profiter sans relâche. A travers les influences les plus diverses et les plus heureusement combinées, ils ont conservé l'un et l'autre toute leur originalité, ce goût, ce sens de la beauté et des proportions, cette fécondité d'invention inépuisable, ce rare mélange d'élégance et de force, de savoir et d'inspiration, cette souplesse et cette universalité d'aptitudes que nous admirons en eux et qui leur ont permis d'exceller dans toutes les branches de leur art."

The essence of these perspectives on Mozart seems to be that the primary quality of his music, like of Raphael's painting, is the grace and elegance of the execution—the sheer beauty of the music.

If this sense of musical grace and elegance separated Mozart positively from other composers at the *fin de siècle*, it also had negative effects on perceptions of Mozart in France, manifested primarily in a view of Mozart as an effeminate figure. "Feminine grace" (or the lack thereof), as Katharine Ellis has amply demonstrated, was a major feature in the rhetoric attached to female pianists from the 1840s through the end of the century.[65] Female performers were "graceful" and "sweet," while male performers were "powerful" and "expressive." Certainly the former adjectives were attached to Mozart more often that the latter, at least after 1900.

The increasingly prevalent perception of Mozart as a "feminine" composer would have had a significant effect on performances of his work during the *fin de siècle*, as mainstream French society experienced a push towards traditionally "masculine" qualities. A number of scholars have noted the "crisis of masculinity" that developed in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War.[66] This crisis was created by a combination of factors, the two most important being the rapid increase in the prominence of women in French society and the feeling of emasculation that plagued men after the War of 1870.[67]

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[65] Katharine Ellis, "Female Pianists and Their Male Critics in Nineteenth-Century Paris," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50 (1997): 353–85.

[66] The use of the term "crisis of masculinity" to describe *fin-de-siècle* France during this period is taken from Annelise Maugue¸ *L'Identité masculine en crise au tournant du siècle: 1871–1914* (Paris: Rivages, 1987), which remains a central work on the topic. For another major work on masculinity in France at this time , see Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[67] Edward Berenson, for example, has pointed out that "improvements in the status and condition of women, achieved in large part through the efforts of a growing feminist movement, created intense feelings

This backlash against "feminine" qualities extended into music, as well. Annegret Fauser has demonstrated that the concept of "masculine" music culture served to highlight "accepted cultural values that met a need for reassurance in threatening times." Fauser continues:

> Given that the shared notion of "masculinity" represented the highest and healthiest concept in the cultural and social hierarchy of Republican France, its constant presence in the cultural discourses of the *fin de siècle* is anything but unexpected. It played an important role in refining and appropriating French music past and present for the endeavor of patriotic and nationalist self-definition of both the French right and left in all their different shades.[68]

Parisian audiences during this time of crisis would have been significantly less willing to accept works by a "feminine" composer than by a "masculine" one—a bias that surely had a negative impact on the frequency with which Mozart's operas were staged.

As with so many trends in music aesthetics, the idea of a "feminine" Mozart may have had its roots at least partly in Wagner's writings. As I discuss more fully in Chapter 3, Wagner frequently characterized music as feminine and poetry as masculine—when combined, these elements produced a perfectly balanced offspring in Wagner's own music dramas. In *Oper und Drama*, Wagner specifically addressed the feminine nature of Mozart's music for *Don Giovanni*, as Gernot Gruber has pointed out:

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of fear, hostility, and vulnerability among France's male commentators of the era. Exacerbating these feelings was a lingering sense of impotence stemming from France's disastrous defeat at the hands of Prussia in September 1870…. French males—defeated in war, vulnerable to a potent working class—feared deep down that foreigners saw them as lacking in the honor and warriorlike virility still widely believed to embody masculinity itself." Edward Berenson, *The Trial of Madame Caillaux* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 113–14.

[68] Annegret Fauser, "Gendering the Nations: The Ideologies of French Discourse on Music (1870–1914)," in *Musical Constructions of Nationalism: Essays on the History and Ideology of European Music, 1800–1945*, ed. Harry White and Michael Murphy (Cork, IR: Cork University Press, 2001), 91.

> The resolution of the dialectical tension [between masculine poetry and feminine music] emerges at the end of the first part of *Oper und Drama*, when Wagner returns yet again to *Don Giovanni* and finally establishes the happy coincidence of music and poetry with the emphatic exclamation: 'Where else has music achieved such infinitely rich individuality, where else has it been able to characterize in such a richly exuberant plenitude as here, where the musician, according to the nature of his art, is nothing less than a woman whose love is unconditional?' Wagner also speaks at the end of the second part about 'music as a woman, splendid in her love': Mozart, apparently, stands for the feminine, the devoted, the emotional, the naïvely unconscious, and for the musical as such.[69]

This characterization of Mozart as "feminine," "devoted," "emotional" and "naïvely unconscious" recurs often throughout his *fin-de-siècle* reception. From the 1870s to the 1890s, descriptions of Mozart that included feminine qualities usually made some effort to redeem the composer by including masculine characteristics, as well. In his 1873 history, Choquet, for example, emphasized Mozart's apparently feminine characteristics but added a disclaimer:

> A poet at once *fanciful*, elegiac, and Christian, Mozart shines still more by the *grace* and the *tenderness* than by the gift of infectious joviality: he loved so much, and he suffered so much! …The artist remained *faithful* to his particular style, the *elegance* and perfection of which one cannot help but admire. This style makes itself remarkable by its obvious *spontaneity*; nevertheless it carries at the same time the mark of *mature reflection*. (emphasis added)[70]

[69] Gernot Gruber, *Mozart and Posterity*, trans. R. S. Furness (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994), 163–64.

[70] Choquet, *Histoire*, 176. "Poëte fantaisiste, poëte élégiaque et poëte chrétien, Mozart brille plus encore par la grâce et par la sensibilité que par le don de la gaieté communicative : il a tant aimé, il a tant souffert ! …[L]'artiste demeure fidèle à son style particulier, dont on ne se lasse pas d'admirer l'élégance et la perfection. Ce style se fait remarquer par son évidente spontanéité, et néanmoins il porte en même temps l'empreinte d'une mûre réflexion."

In this brief passage, Choquet describes the "fanciful" nature of Mozart's music, as well its "grace" and "tenderness," and "obvious spontaneity"; the composer himself is described as being "faithful" to his musical style. These descriptions are all clearly qualities attributed to "feminine" music and its performers. Choquet, however, balances his description by pointing out that, despite these "feminine" elements, the music demonstrates "mature reflection," a "masculine"-coded term. The end result of the passage is a kind of androgynous reading of Mozart, possessing the (arguably) positive elements of "feminine" music, saved by more serious "masculine" elements.[71]

By the early twentieth century, however, this androgynous view of Mozart had begun to shift towards an entirely "feminine" perspective on the composer. Téodor de Wyzewa, for example, wrote in the introduction to the first volume of his enormous Mozart biography (1912; co-authored with Georges de Saint-Foix) that Mozart differed from Beethoven primarily in the character of his spirit. While Beethoven's masculine nature allowed the composer to basically generate his own music from within, Mozart had to look outside himself:

> Always, with his essentially "feminine" nature, this poetic genius had to get from elsewhere the spirit necessary to employ his art in new ways, — except for him to transfigure immediately, in animating them with an importance and with a beauty at once much higher [than the source] and

[71] Henri Lavoix's description of Mozart in his *Histoire de la musique*, written a decade after Choquet's volume, is much the same: "Mozart's genius is in his *grace*, in the ineffable *tenderness* that nothing can surpass; it is also in the miraculous balance of all the parts of the work, in the clarity, in the perfect purity of the musical language. But Mozart, *gentle*, *tender*, and classical *par excellence*, possesses at the same time the spirit of finesse, as in *les Noces de Figaro* and *Così fan tutte*, and *boldness of force*, as in *Don Juan*." (emphasis added) ["Le génie de Mozart est dans son grâce, la tendresse ineffable, que nul n'a pu surpasser ; il est aussi dans la merveilleuse pondération de toutes les parties de l'œuvre, dans la clarté, dans la parfaite pureté de la langue musicale. Mais ce doux, ce tendre, ce classique par excellence, possède en même temps l'esprit de la finesse, comme dans *les Noces de Figaro* et *Cosi fan tutte*, la hardiesse et la force, comme dans *Don Juan*."] Henri Lavoix, *Histoire de la musique* (Paris: Quantin, 1884), 211–12.

> entirely original, the ideas or the processes he discovered in the work of this or that musician, encountered in passing.[72]

Wyzewa offers no evidence for Mozart's supposedly "feminine" essence. Rather, it is simply assumed to be a self-evident characteristic of the composer and his music. Even after World War I, Mozart was perceived as a somehow effeminate figure. In 1925, for example, Reynaldo Hahn's operetta *Mozart* featured the composer—at 22 years old—performed by a female soprano.[73]

It was a small step from viewing Mozart as feminine—and thus lacking in power and virility—to seeing him as a child. In *fin-de-siècle* psychological thought, after all, women were evolutionarily stunted, forever remaining at a childlike level of development. Incapable of the intellectual pursuits of logic and reasoning that were the domain of men alone, women were creatures capable of great tenderness, but dangerously ruled by their emotions, much like children.[74] Romain Rolland expressed such a perspective on Mozart in his *Musiciens d'autrefois*, writing that Mozart "had quick sympathies and the gentleness of a woman—or rather of a child, for he was given to tears and laughter, to teasing, and all the tricks of a warm-hearted boy."[75] Rolland went on

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[72] Téodor de Wyzewa and Georges de Saint-Foix, *Wolfgang Amédée Mozart: Sa vie musicale et son œuvre*, 5 vols. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1936–46), I, iv–v. "Toujours, avec sa nature essentiellement 'féminine,' ce génie poétique a eu besoin de recevoir d'ailleurs l'élan nécessaire pour engager son art dans des voies nouvelles, — sauf pour lui à transfigurer tout de suite, en les animant d'une signification et d'une beauté à la fois bien plus hautes et tout originales, les idées ou les procédés que lui révélait l'œuvre de tel ou tel musicien rencontré au passage."

[73] Though the character of Mozart is played by a female soprano, he does spend much of the operetta pursuing various female love interests, making Mozart into something of a Cherubino figure. This element of his character, however, does not mitigate the overall "feminine" portrayal of the composer.

[74] For an analysis of *fin-de-siècle* views on the "woman's brain," see Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), Chapter 6.

[75] *Romain Rolland's Essays on Music* (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), 247.

further to claim that Mozart's "heart remained that of a child, and beneath all his music we seem to hear a simple demand: 'I love you; please love me.'"[76] Quite frequently around the turn of the century, Mozart was visually represented as a child, capturing the composer within the myth of the eternal child-genius. As Pascal-Estienne reported in *L'Europe artiste*, in honor of the performances of *Don Juan* at the Opéra and Opéra-Comique in 1896, "the Exposition du Théâtre et de la Musique offered to its audiences of last Tuesday a Conference on the subject of the child Mozart, followed by a one-act play in verse: *Mozart enfant*."[77] This emphasis on Mozart as a child was nothing new—such a perspective had colored the composer's reception in the earlier nineteenth century.[78] But during the mid-century the Romantic view of Mozart, epitomized by *Don Juan*, had taken hold at the expense of the image of the child prodigy.

As the image of the Romantic Mozart began to fade around 1900, however, the fascination with "Mozart enfant" began to reappear. In 1904, the *Revue des deux mondes* printed a large two-part article by Téodor de Wyzewa on the subject of Mozart as a youth.[79] The April 1906 issue of *Musica* was devoted entirely to Mozart (on the 150th anniversary of his birth), and the issue's cover featured a portrait of the composer striking in its depiction not only of the composer as a child, but as a surprisingly effeminate one (see Fig. 2.4). The young Mozart is pictured there with long, gracefully curling hair (in

[76] *Romain Rolland's Essays on Music*, 255.

[77] *L'Europe artiste*, 22 November 1896. "l'Exposition du Théâtre et de la Musique offrait à ses spectateurs de mardi dernier une Conférence sur Mozart enfant, suivie d'un acte en vers : *Mozart enfant*."

[78] As Alicia Levin has pointed out, during the 1820s the young Liszt was frequently compared to Mozart, whose exploits as a child prodigy in Paris had left a lasting impression on critics and audiences. Alicia Levin, "Seducing Paris: Piano Virtuosos and Artistic Identity, 1820–48" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2009), Chapter 2.

[79] This article, entitled "La Jeunesse de Mozart," began in April 1904 and concluded in November of that year.

stark contrast to standard depictions of Mozart as a child); one hand is visible, displaying long "feminine" fingers. Without the male clothing, this might almost be a portrait of a young noblewoman.

The roots of these shifts may lie somewhat in the change from the Romantic to the Classical Mozart. While the nineteenth-century vision of *Don Juan* was sustained, then Mozart the composer could also retain some characteristics of the masculine Beethovenian suffering artist. As the Romantic Mozart was gradually replaced by the eighteenth-century figure in the years after 1900, however, this masculinity was stripped away, leaving only the woman-child figure. These issues of gender in Mozart's *fin-de-siècle* reception were not limited to perceptions of the composer himself; the operas themselves proved to be highly problematic for conservative audiences, especially in the way in which the gender issues of *fin-de-siècle* society may have colored how listeners interpreted Mozart's works.

Central in the discussion of gender in turn-of-the-century Paris was the dichotomy of the "Real Woman" (*la vraie femme*) versus the "New Woman" (*la femme nouvelle*). As the French feminist movement began to gain more momentum in the 1890s, the dangerously "masculine" New Woman posed a threat to traditional power structures and family structures.[80] As art historian Debora Silverman has pointed out, in the politically and socially unstable atmosphere of the *fin de siècle*, "even slight tampering with female identity and female activity was experienced as a threat to the entire structure; the menace

[80] On the "New Woman," see Mary Louise Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), especially Chapter 1; Debora L. Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), Chapter 4; and James F. McMillan, *France and Women, 1789–1914: Gender, Society and Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), Chapter 10.


**Fig. 2.4: Depiction of the child Mozart. Cover of *Musica,* April 1907. "W.-A. Mozart à l'âge de dix ans, d'après le tableau de Dominique Van der Smissen, fait en 1766."**

of the *femme nouvelle* was therefore met with an active campaign to relegitimate women's procreative and moral role."[81] Certainly, many critics complained loudly enough about the increasingly prevalent images of the "New Woman" on stage; Jules Lemaître (who reviewed operas as well) wrote of Jules Case's influential play *La Vassale* (1897) that the work presented only "yet another woman beating our ears with demands for her rights."[82]

In contrast to the New Woman, the Real Woman posed no threat to French masculinity, and, in fact, supported it. As Edward Berenson explains:

> *La femme, la vraie femme*, was for most French men of the era a creature governed by her emotions. Her intellect was limited, her practical and technical abilities restrained. The real woman acted not in the exterior world of politics and business, or even of literature and the arts, but in the inner sanctum of the home. She did not make a spectacle of herself…nor did she seek to upstage her husband. This womanly woman had no ambition beyond that of caring for her husband, her home, and most important of all her children. She was frail and frivolous, given to transports of childlike sentiment. But her disposition, frustrating as it might occasionally be, was as it should be. For the real woman needed not to shape the world, but to secure the family.[83]

It stands to reason that more conservative audience members, seeking validation of their traditional social power structures, would turn to theatrical stages for examples. Male audience members sought more traditional depictions of women to reaffirm their own masculinity, and many female audience members found equal reassurance in seeing their conservative values reflected on stage. Producers and composers were happy to oblige

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[81] Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France*, 67.

[82] *La Revue des deux mondes*, 1 August 1897. Quoted in Roberts, *Disruptive Acts*, 28. Roberts describes the increasing number of plays that depicted the New Woman (often in a favorable light), much to the dismay of more conservative critics and audience members.

[83] Berenson, *The Trail of Madame Caillaux*, 92.

them, and opera houses were filled with depictions of either "real women"—who often die a sacrificial death—or transgressive women who are suitably punished by the final curtain.[84] But femininity was not the only gender issue at play on the *fin-de-siècle* stage. Demoralized and demasculinized men (and, again, traditionally minded women) of the Third Republic also turned to the theater for strong male role models.[85] Mozart's operas, however, disappointed on both fronts.

Socially acceptable (at least by nineteenth-century standards) female roles do not appear with any frequency in Mozart's works, and most of the male characters are either feminized or challenged in their authority. *Le nozze di Figaro* (*Les Noces de Figaro* in France), conspicuously absent from the stages of both the Opéra and Opéra-Comqiue after 1886, features two main female roles (leaving aside the cross-dressed Cherubino, who is a problematic figure in the best of times): Susanna and the Countess. The former spends most of the opera avoiding the Count's unwanted advances, and generally outsmarting the male characters (including her fiancé). The Countess, while a paragon of faithfulness (in Mozart's opera, at least), is almost equally crafty, and by the end of the opera has reduced her ostensibly powerful husband to begging for forgiveness, literally

[84] There was no shortage of redemptive women on the *fin-de-siècle* stage. Wagner's operas provide notable examples, including Elizabeth in *Tannhäuser*, who dies purely to save the hero's soul. Similarly, in d'Indy's *Fervaal*, the hero's soul is saved (indirectly) by the loving sacrifice of the heroine Guilhen. Examples of "real women" who demonstrate their faithfulness and are rewarded include the eponymous heroines of Massenet's *Griséldis* and Fauré's *Pénélope*. *Fin-de-siècle* women punished for their transgressive actions include, most notably, Carmen, whose "misdeeds" lead inexorably to her death at Don José's hands. Isolde, in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, also dies (less gruesomely) for her forbidden love for Tristan, as does the adulterous Guenièvre (by suicide) in Ernest Chausson's *Le Roi Arthus*, to name only a few examples.

[85] Again, Wagner's perennially popular operas contain no shortage of valiant heroes, most prominently Lohengrin and Parsifal. Other examples include Ulysse in Fauré's *Pénélope*, the title character in d'Indy's *Fervaal*, Ernest Reyer's eponymous Sigurd, the young Dominique in Bruneau's *L'Attaque du Moulin*, and so on.

on his knees. And, as Mary Hunter has pointed out, the Countess's authority is largely tied to the decline of her husband's:

> her trajectory rises just as the Count's begins to fall. Within the world of the plot she exercises very little power….But in the auditorium, to the audience (at least in modern times), the Countess's power is unparalleled; she is the one who literally stops the show with "Porgi amor," and who provides the literal coup de grace at the end by agreeing to pardon the Count for his transgressions.[86]

Although the opera ends with what David Levin calls a "flurry of domestication," in which all major characters (save, arguably, Cherubino and Barberina) are systematically paired off into "normal" couples, this happy resolution is brought about almost entirely by the efforts of Susanna and the Countess.[87] We must surely agree with Charles Ford when he points out that in Mozart's operas, "women are never again allowed the strength of Susanna and the Contessa together in *Le Nozze di Figaro*."[88] Neither of these figures could be described in any way as "frail and frivolous," and both are anything but submissive to the Count's demands. Furthermore, far from being punished for their disruptions of the proper social order, they are rewarded with apologies and vows of love and devotion. Susanna and the Countess, in fact, bear more in common with the "New Woman" than with her antithesis.

*Fin-de-siècle* audiences were faced with a similar situation with *Don Giovanni*; once again, none of the opera's female characters could reasonably be interpreted as a

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[86] Mary Hunter, *Mozart's Operas: A Companion* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 141.

[87] David J. Levin, *Unsettling Opera: Staging Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Zemlinsky* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 78.

[88] Charles Ford, *Così? Sexual Politics in Mozart's Operas* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), 152.

"vraie femme." Donna Anna, physically violated and orphaned by the Don in a single night, had the potential to appeal to the sympathies of *fin-de-siècle* male audiences. Not content to play the powerless victim in need of male rescuing, in her feverish quest for vengeance she drags Ottavio behind her for most of the opera, rendering him almost totally feminized. Worse still, perhaps (from a *fin-de-siècle* perspective), is the fact that, despite his efforts on her behalf, she refuses (at least temporarily) to marry him at the work's conclusion, and thus rejects the true occupations of the "Real Woman": wifehood and motherhood. Her lust for revenge, and subsequent refusal to be suitably domesticated, was decidedly un-feminine.[89] Donna Elvira is driven to near madness by the sheer force of her passion/hatred for Don Giovanni—embodying the emotional aspect of the "real woman" but with none of the mitigating docility. The peasant girl Zerlina makes a cuckold of her husband Masetto on their wedding day, leaving her own party with Don Giovanni (thought she does later repent and beg Masetto for forgiveness). Again, none of these women are punished for their dangerous lack of femininity. Only Don Giovanni suffers for his misdeeds—which may themselves be perceived as resulting only from the expression of extreme (one might say pathological) masculinity. The Don, the paragon of the Romantic (anti-)hero, was in danger of giving ground to more moral alternatives.

Because of these transgressive female characters and the woes they cause their male counterparts, Mozart's libretti were equally unlikely to provide Republican men with suitable role models. In *Le Nozze di Figaro,* by the end of the day both the Count

[89] Kristi Brown-Montesano has argued that the negative musicological (and performative) reception of Donna Anna's character—Edward Dent referred to her as a "thoroughly unpleasant lady," for example—is a reflection of her usurpation of the traditionally masculine realm of revenge and her refusal to conform to traditional *opera buffa* ideas of domesticity. Kristi Brown-Montesano, *Understanding the Women of Mozart's Operas* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), Chapter 1.

and Figaro have clearly been bested by their wives. In *Don Giovanni*, Masetto has been abandoned (if only briefly) and is utterly powerless to exact any revenge on the Don, an impotence shared by Don Ottavio. The wily Leporello is essentially a slave to his master, and the Don himself is a slave to his desires. The only possible virtuous and strong male character in the opera is the Commendatore, who dies in the work's first scene defending the virtue of his daughter.

Mozart's other operas offered no better alternatives, either for men or women. *Così fan tutte*, at its very heart a work hinging on female infidelity—infidelity that goes entirely unpunished, at that—was viewed in France as an almost entirely immoral work, and was not revived until 1920. *Idomeneo*, although performed in a concert version at the Schola Cantorum in 1902, remained virtually unknown to French audiences, as did *La clemenza di Tito* and Mozart's early works. *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, performed at the Opéra-Comique in 1903, was by all accounts an unsuccessful production, leaving critics and audiences alike bored.[90] In short, audiences in search of traditional gender roles in Mozart's operas were, for the most part, bound to be disappointed.

***

In the previous sections, I have traced a number of shifts in *fin-de-siècle* French perception of Mozart. Whereas in the mid-nineteenth century the composer was

[90] Paul Dukas, normally one to celebrate any production of Mozart's operas, reported that "apart from some charming pieces, *L'Enlèvement au Sérail* is, at present, a historically interesting work more than a creation likely to spark a truly unprovoked admiration." ["à part quelques morceaux charmants, l'*Enlèvement au Sérail* est, à présent, une œuvre historiquement intéressante plutôt qu'une création propre à susciter une admiration vraiment spontanée."] *Chronique des Arts et de la Curiosité*, December 1903. Reprinted in *Les Écrits de Paul Dukas sur la musique*, 601.

masculinized and divorced from his historical and geographical context, by World War I Mozart was clearly a feminized German composer, and he and his operas were readily identified as products of the eighteenth century. The net result of all these changes was to open the composer to a new and damaging criticism: irrelevance to modern French audiences. After the War of 1870 and the Commune, the atmosphere in France became significantly more somber, reflecting the nation's crisis in identity during this time.[91] Mozart's operas, with their happy endings and comic characters, simply did not reflect the prevailing aesthetic of post-1870 France, and neither did it provide confirmation for Republican ideals of masculinity and femininity. Without the cloak of "universality" protecting him, Mozart's works began to appear in some ways frivolous. Romain Rolland, for example, pointed to Mozart's decidedly un-Romantic life in contrast to Beethoven or Wagner:

> As Mozart himself did not suffer from passion, so his heroes are not troubled with broken hearts. The sadness of Anna, or even the jealousy of Elektra in *Idomeneo*, bear no resemblance to the spirit let loose by Beethoven and Wagner. The only passions that Mozart knew well were anger and pride. The greatest of all passions—"the entire Venus"—never appeared in him. It is this lack which gives his whole work a character of ineffable peace.[92]

Because Mozart's life lacked drama, or at least the Romantic type of drama cultivated in the nineteenth century, his characters could not be interpreted as reflecting deep emotional situations. For Rolland, such a situation was not necessarily a negative aspect of Mozart's operas, but what Rolland saw as their "ineffable peace" was viewed by other critics as a fundamental lack of necessary dramatic focus. As early as 1878, Wagner—

[91] See Chapter 3 for a more complete discussion of music's role in contributing to this tragic atmosphere.

[92] Reprinted in *Romain Rolland's Essays on Music*, 255.

whose opinions never failed to have an impact on the French—had leveled such an accusation at Mozart:

> Intelligent people praised the way in which the roughly sketched and incomplete nature of his texts, for example in *Don Juan*, lent itself to a masque, which corresponded so agreeably with his music, a music that reflected the most passionate aspects of the human situation in a charmingly delightful game.
>
> If this opinion could be easily misunderstood, and could even be disparaging and harmful, well, it was meant seriously and contained within itself the generally current opinion of our aesthetic experts regarding the proper activity of music, against which it is difficult to fight, even today. But I believe that Mozart completely exhausted this form of art, a form which, in a very deep sense, may be open to the charge of frivolity….[93]

Wagner does not deny that *Don Juan* dealt in some way with "the most passionate aspects of the human situation," but only as a "game," and not in a deeper way. Consequently, Mozart's type of opera was "open to the charge of frivolity."

Perceptions of the composer as somehow "feminine" likely did not help matters in this regard. As Ellis reminds us, the feminine in nineteenth-century French music criticism (particularly that of Berlioz) was inextricably tied to the idea of *broderie*, the idea of frivolous ornament in music—style without substance.[94] As Mozart's image became tinged with an aura of femininity so too did his music, opening it to the charge of being nothing more than *broderie*, bereft of deeper meaning. The counterpart to this frivolity was the sublime in music, a characteristic that would allow the music to touch on the higher mysteries of human nature and transcend any claim of emptiness or femininity.

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[93] Richard Wagner, "Das Publikum in Zeit und Raum." Quoted in Gruber, *Mozart and Posterity*, 166.

[94] Katharine Ellis, "Berlioz, the Sublime, and the *Broderie* Problem," in *Hector Berlioz: Miscellaneous Studies*, ed. Fulvia Morabito and Michela Niccolai (Bologna: Ut Orpheus Edizioni, 2005): 29–59.

What Mozart needed to succeed in the *fin de siècle* was an opera that could provide this sublimity, reaffirm both traditional gender roles and mainstream Republican morality, and provide the sense of pathos that many audience members (and critics) sought on stage. Among Mozart's operas, only *Die Zauberflöte* could serve such a purpose, and it is to that work that I turn in my case study. The 1909 production of the work at the Opéra-Comique offered *fin-de-siècle* critics, producers, and audiences a new chance to find relevance in Mozart's operas, saving them from the obscurity that loomed threateningly on the horizon. Not all critics jumped at this chance, however, and so *The Magic Flute* presents a clear example of critical discord regarding how, precisely, Mozart's works should be featured in the Operatic Museum.

**CASE STUDY: *The Magic Flute*, 1909**

In contrast to the generally warm reception Mozart's operas received at the *fin de siècle*, the 1909 production of *La Flûte enchantée* at the Opéra-Comique met with decidedly mixed reviews. The work created sharp divisions in the press, in many cases exemplifying the divide between nineteenth- and twentieth-century interpretations of Mozart and his music that I have examined in the chapter thus far.

Unlike most issues surrounding the 1909 *Flûte enchantée*, the Parisian stage design and costumes received nearly universal approval. The libretto (whatever its other faults) offered the opportunity for extravagant costumes and exotic locations, and so the stagecraft received substantially more attention in the press than was typical. Several major journals featured designs from the opera; Figure 2.5 is a photograph of Papageno

and Papagena from the journal *Le Théâtre*, which covered opera in addition to productions of plays. As this image demonstrates, Papageno and Papagena offered the opportunity for whimsical costumes, providing comic relief in their costumes as well as in their text.

LE THÉATRE

ABONNEMENT ET VENTE : 24, Bd des Capucines. — Téléph. : 242-49 | CONDITIONS DE L'ABONNEMENT : PARIS : 1 an 40 fr. | DÉPARTEMENTS : 1 an 44 fr. ÉTRANGER (Union Postale) : 1 an : 52 fr. | PUBLICITÉ : 15, rue de la Ville-l'Évêque. — Téléph. : 313-73

N° 255 Août (I) 1909

Photo Bert. PAPAGENA (Mlle Mathieu-Lutz) PAPAGENO (M. Fugère)

THÉATRE NATIONAL DE L'OPÉRA-COMIQUE. — *LA FLUTE ENCHANTÉE*

**Figure 2.5: Papageno and Papagena in the 1909 Opéra-Comique production of *La Flûte enchantée*. *Le Théâtre*, August (I) 1909.**

The stage designs, as well, drew a great deal of critical praise. Writing in *Le Courrier musical*, the critic Adhéaume de Chevigné praised the stagecraft (and only the stagecraft) highly, claiming that the décor at the Opéra-Comique attained "quasi-perfection," and that "never, surely, has Mozart's masterwork known such splendor or equal éclat."[95] Unfortunately, for many critics the perfection of the stage design only served to place into relief those elements of the performance that they found unacceptable. Chevigné, for example, found fault with both the music and the libretto:

> [Mozart's music] is reduced too easily to a second-rate accompaniment to the dull drollery that springs from Schikaneder's imagination…. Mozart, however, succeeded with his incomparable genius in giving [Schikaneder's words] finesse, a bit of originality, almost interest, even despite a lack of spirit that is impossible to introduce there [into the work]. Unfortunately, the genius is smothered and the music disappears. There was no need, to achieve this result, for collaboration with such a great musician.
>
> …
>
> The majority of the public, after four hours spent looking at the decoration; the light; the costumes, richly colored with gold, gems, and plumes; believed they took from the work an adequate idea.
>
> The other part of the public, the minority, thought, whimpering, that in doing so one was reasonably far away from Mozart. This last group is right.[96]

[95] *Le Courrier musical*, 1 July 1909. "Jamais sûrement, le chef-d'œuvre de Mozart n'avait connu une telle splendeur et un pareil éclat."

[96] *Le Courrier musical*, 1 July 1909. "Celle-ci est réduite trop facilement à l'accompagnement quelconque des épaisses drôleries sorties de l'imagination de Schikaneder…Mozart avait pourtant réussi à leur donner, avec son génie incomparable, de la finesse quelquefois, un peu d'originalité, presque de l'intérêt, à défaut d'esprit impossible à y introduire. Malheureusement le génie est étouffé et la musique disparaît. Point n'était besoin, pour ce résultat, de la collaboration d'un aussi grand musicien.

…

…La majorité du public après quatre heures occupées à regarder la peinture, la lumière, les costumes richement bariolés d'or, de pierreries et de plumes a cru emporter de l'œuvre une idée suffisante.

L'autre partie de ce public, la minorité, a pensé, en gémissant, qu'on était, en ainsi faisant, passablement loin de Mozart. Ces derniers ont raison."

The clever stage design could not, it seems, make up for the lamentable deficiencies of both the music and the libretto.

Both of these topics assumed great importance in the reception of the 1909 *Magic Flute*. For some critics, the music was trivial; for others it was sublime in its simplicity. Likewise, the libretto was regarded by various camps as symbolic and profound, fundamentally flawed, or a combination of the two. Hovering around the critical discourse of both the libretto and the music were two larger, though often unspoken, issues in the reception of *The Magic Flute* in *fin-de-siècle* France: the moral virtue of the work, and its status as "German opera."

## The Magic Flute *and Morality*

*The Magic Flute* had throughout the nineteenth century a unique reputation as being an inherently moral work. Despite the significant differences between the work's varied incarnations in France, the outline of the plot always involved the triumph of good over evil, and the superiority of the virtuous over the wicked. Unlike *Le nozze di Figaro*, for example, where even the noblest of characters is capable of deception and duplicity when serving a higher purpose, in *The Magic Flute* the characters of Pamina, Sarastro, and Tamino represent a purity and simplicity of spirit lacking in Mozart's other operas. In this way, the work was able to appeal to the French ideal of the musical sublime. The idea of the sublime, the modern French origins of which can be traced to Diderot, was crystallized in musical criticism by Berlioz. As Katherine Ellis has pointed out, the sublime was a major topic in Berlioz's criticism, where he used the term to identify "the

noblest of human sentiments and the loftiest of human aspirations"—a definition that later writers adopted, as well.[97]

Critics took note of this quality fairly early in the history of *The Magic Flute*'s reception in France. In his review of the 1855 production of the opera (reprinted in a collection of writings on music in 1880), for example, Henri Blaze de Bury wrote of the pure and noble character of the romance between Tamino and Pamina:

> Of all the sentiments that men experience, the purest and most divine is that which women engender in them. Only this kind of love, which Tamino evokes, is not at all passion, as in *Don Juan* or *les Noces de Figaro*—it is something more moral, more sublime, a goal that one can only reach through initiation.[98]

According to Blaze de Bury, the emotions expressed in Mozart's Italian operas was mere passion, while the love expressed in *The Magic Flute* was of a more sublime character,

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[97] Ellis,"Berlioz, the Sublime, and the *Broderie* Problem," 41. Caballero argues that praise of the sublime became "exceedingly rare" in later French criticism, suggesting that "in refusing the grand the superiority of the sublime to the perfect, many French musicians, while absorbing so many other tendencies from across the Rhine, put up an isolated but fundamental resistance to German idealism." While evocations of sublimity may have been more uncommon in France than in Germany, however, many *fin-de-siècle* critics were certainly willing to use the term in a positive sense, and the term is often used to denote either a particularly moving performance or any musical passage or piece with transcendent qualities. Saint-Saëns, like Berlioz, seems to have used the term to indicate the highest levels of human emotion. For instance, in a discussion of Wagner's operas, he noted that "Womankind in Wagnerian drama, initially loving and tender like Elsa or passionate like Isolde, becomes sublime with Brünnhilde who, in her love and sorrow, progresses from divinity to humanity—a bold idea, indeed a truly modern and philosophical one." Thus the sublimity attained through the work is by the heights and purity of Brünhilde's emotion. Michael Puri has also recently speculated as to the influence of the concept of sublimity in Ravel's *oeuvre* around 1910, influenced by the archetype of the dandy, one who, in Baudelaire's words, "aspires to be sublime without interruption." Caballero, *Fauré and French Musical Aesthetics*, 296–97 (endnote 79); Saint-Saëns's description of Brünnhilde is found in the Introduction to *Harmonie et mélodie* Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1885). Reprinted in *Camille Saint-Saëns On Music and Musicians*, trans. and ed. Roger Nichols (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7; Michael J. Puri, "Dandy, Interrupted: Sublimation, Repression, and Self-Portraiture in Maurice Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* (1909–1912)," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 60 (2007): 317–372.

[98] Blaze de Bury, *Musiciens du passé, du présent et de l'avenir*, 93–94. The original review appeared on 15 March 1855. "De tous les sentiments que l'homme éprouve, le plus pur, le plus divin est celui que la femme fait naître. Seulement cet amour dont parle Tamino n'est point la passion comme dans *Don Juan* ou *les Noces de Figaro*, c'est quelque chose de plus moral, de plus sublime, un but auquel on n'atteint que par la vertu de l'initiation."

unburdened by either the worldliness of Susanna and Figaro or the depredations of Don Giovanni.

Notions of *The Magic Flute*'s sublime qualities did not end with the nineteenth century. For many critics, the nobility of the *The Magic Flute*'s story is matched by the sublime clarity, purity, and simplicity of its music. In 1909, Fauré found sublimity not only in the opera's central romance, but in the work as a whole. For him, it was an expression of "the purest and most ideal perfection." He continued:

> Does there exist a music that can give us impressions at once so immediate and so profound, a music that, without exerting the least effort, keeps the spirit in such joy, such tranquility, and which, at the same time as the strongest, or most exquisite, or most serene emotions, results in such great learning?[99]

Here again, Fauré ties *The Magic Flute* to nineteenth-century notions of the sublime in music. The contradictory descriptions of the work—simplicity/profundity, joy/tranquility, strongest/most serene emotions—are essential elements of Berliozian notions of the sublime. Significantly, explicitly or implicitly identifying *The Magic Flute* as being a "sublime" work would go a long way in defending Mozart against the charges of frivolity—associated with *broderie*, as I have already discussed. Sublimity and *broderie* were in the nineteenth century regarded as oxymoronic (though, as Ellis reveals, some music rested uncomfortably on the border). Furthermore, a focus on *The Magic Flute*'s sublimity allowed the work to function as an on-stage exemplar of morality, a feature that Mozart's other dramatic works failed to offer, as I have pointed out above. The characters

[99] *Le Figaro*, 1 June 1909. Reprinted in Fauré, *Opinions musicales*, 93. "Existe-t-il une musique que puisse faire ressentir des impressions à la fois si immédiates et si profondes, une musique qui, sans exiger le moindre effort, maintienne l'esprit en une telle joie, en une telle quiétude, et d'où découle, en même temps que les émotions les plus fortes, ou les plus exquises, ou les plus sereines, tant de grands enseignements?"

offer clear guidelines, conforming to conservative Republican ideas about both gender roles and religion.

In terms of gender roles, *The Magic Flute* could hardly be clearer.[100] Though *fin-de-siècle* critics are almost entirely silent on the matter—they seldom engaged with character analysis at all—the images of male and female power relations that audiences would have seen in 1909 were unmistakable. Jacques Chailley has pointed out that the entire opera may be seen as the conflict between the Masculine, embodied in Sarastro, and the Feminine, represented by the Queen of the Night.[101] The dominant positive personality of the work is clearly Sarastro, the wise and benevolent priest figure. Here (essentially alone in Mozart's *oeuvre*) is a male figure without flaw, upholding purity and morality at all costs while at the same time presenting a clearly powerful and masculine figure (see Fig. 2.6). He provides Tamino with a strong role model, steering the young prince to the light and helping him to achieve enlightenment. Indeed, part of that path seems to be the rejection of the Feminine, as the Prince's most painful trial is the rejection of Pamina in order to enter Sarastro's (masculine) order.[102]

[100] A historiographic summary of gender in the interpretation of *The Magic Flute* may be found in Brown-Montesano, *Understanding the Women of Mozart's Operas*, Chapters 4 and 5.

[101] Jacques Chailley, The Magic Flute *Unveiled: Esoteric Symbolism in Mozart's Masonic Opera*, trans. Herbert Weinstock (Rochester: Inner Traditions International, 1992), 93. For Chailley, this conflict is resolved by the essential union of Tamino and Pamina, effectively creating a "whole" entity.

[102] As Brown-Montesano puts it, Pamina "may be his betrothed, but his faithfulness to the tenets of manliness must come first." Brown-Montesano, *Understanding the Women of Mozart's Operas*, 115.


**Fig. 2.6: Juste Nivette as Sarastro in the 1909 *Magic Flute*. *Le Théâtre*, April (I) 1909.**

Like her father, Pamina is also without flaw, prominently displaying *la vraie femme* onstage for all to see. She accedes without question to the demands of both Sarastro and Tamino, and seems to exist primarily to support them in their endeavors.

Her character is, in fact, in large part defined by her relationships to these two male figures, one father, one husband. When she is seemingly rejected by Tamino during his trials, she does not turn to anger or seek revenge on the prince for spurning her; rather, without him her life is simply devoid of meaning, not worth living at all. Her focus on making herself useful to both husband and father—her focus, in short, on "family values" rather than on her own ambition—makes her the very image of the Real Woman so highly sought after in *fin-de-siècle* France.

As such, Pamina is the perfect foil for the Queen of the Night. The polar opposite of her daughter, the Queen seeks power for herself, meaning that she must overcome her (ex?)husband Sarastro, upsetting the "rightful" masculine domination of the home. As Brown-Montesano summarizes, the Queen is "vengeful, scheming, defiant toward male authority, proud, violent, and stubborn"; in short, she was (from a male perspective) the very image of the *femme nouvelle*.[103] She thus represented on stage the fears of socially conservative audience members in *fin-de-siècle* France, threatening traditional hierarchical structures in both the family and the workplace. For transgressing such sacrosanct boundaries she is, of course, duly punished in the end. Furthermore, far from the "purity" and "simplicity" that many critics praised in *The Magic Flute*, the Queen's music is filled with empty coloratura passages—it is, in Carolyn Abbate's words, "the degradation of melodic line, which has the capacity to represent passion, into that which should have been supplementary: into the ornament."[104] The Queen, in stark contrast to the sublimity of much of the rest of the opera, is pure *broderie*. Thus, she vilified not only

[103] Brown-Montesano, *Understanding the Women of Mozart's Operas*, 81.

[104] Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 71. Abbate's analysis of *The Magic Flute* touches on a number of issues related to the Queen and her struggles for power and against masculine domination. See Chapter 2, "Magic Flute, Nocturnal Sun."

the *nouvelle femme*, but also the "feminine" ornamental style of music that nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French critics (particularly Berlioz) rejected.

Aside from its clear presentation of Republican bourgeois gender roles on the stage, *The Magic Flute* also contained for some critics a religious element. In the popular journal *Musica*, for example, Georges Pioch wrote that:

> It is certain that Sarastro's sublime phrases, the religious scenes that confer on *La Flûte enchantée* a sacred value surpassing the beauties where Mozart's clear genius had flowered until that time (1791). We know that *La Flûte enchantée* is his final dramatic work. In it, he seemed driven by that emotion of thought that raises all the arts to the highest summit of human consciousness. … The libretto of *La Flûte enchantée*, by its dual nature as both magical and religious, was perfect for evoking his effusions, which are at once thoughtful and enjoyable.[105]

For Pioch, *The Magic Flute* had a "sacred value" above any of Mozart's other works. This additional element seems to have conferred on the work a special dramatic significance, allowing it to ascend to "the highest summit of human consciousness." This conflation of metaphysical religious content with aesthetic value was not unknown to *fin-de-siècle* audiences; operas that espoused moral values in the form of religious or quasi-religious plots were fairly common. Several of Wagner's operas focused on issues of religious redemption and values, particularly *Tannhäuser* and *Parsifal*. In France, Gounod's *Jeanne d'Arc* (1873) and *Polyeucte* (1878) dealt with the subject of early Christian martyrdom; slightly later, Vincent d'Indy's *Fervaal* (1897, Parisian première at the Opéra-Comique in 1898) was focused on the influence of religious morality on the

[105] *Musica*, July 1909. "Il est certain que les sublimes phrases de Sarastro, les scènes religieuses qui confèrent à *la Flûte enchantée* une valeur sacrée passent les beautés où le clair génie de Mozart s'était jusqu'alors (1791) épanoui. On sait que *la Flûte enchantée* est sa dernière œuvre dramatique. Il y apparaît animé de cette émotion de pensée qui élève tous les arts au plus haut faîte de la conscience humaine. … Le livret de *la Flûte enchantée*, par son double aspect féerique et religieux, était bien propre à susciter ses effusions à la fois pensives et agréables."

title character. D'Indy and others like him were adamant that opera (and music in general) should provide a moral compass for audience members, keeping them on a righteous, religious path.[106] Though not explicitly Christian (the setting of the 1909 production was an ambiguously mythological Egypt), *The Magic Flute* nevertheless represented the type of explicitly moral work that could play into this trend.

In fact, *The Magic Flute*'s abstract religious qualities may have assisted some critics in viewing it as a moral work. Several major *fin-de-siècle* works, notably those by Fauré, toyed with the boundaries between the Christian values and a more "pagan" religious sensibility. Despite its traditionally Catholic genre, the composer's popular Requiem, for example, was viewed by many critics as being only partially a Christian work, more in keeping with the religions of antiquity than with modern French Catholicism.[107] The composer's song cycle *La Chanson d'Ève* (1910), which Fauré was composing during the 1909 *Magic Flute* production, combines elements of pantheism and Catholicism even more explicitly, while still displaying religious sentiment.[108] The agnostic (or at least idiosyncratically theist) Fauré, and many other critics, found that these quasi-Christian works nonetheless contained a deep religious sentiment outside of any specific orthodoxy. *The Magic Flute* was treated very similarly by some critics.

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[106] On *Fervaal* and d'Indy's moral agenda, see Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle*, 301–307 and 317–50. Anya Suschitzky has also persuasively argued that the Catholicism of *Fervaal* represents a fundamental aspect of the works French identity. Anya Suschizky, "*Fervaal*, *Parsifal*, and French National Identity," *19th Century Music* 25 (2002): 237–65.

[107] See Carlo Caballero, *Fauré and French Musical Aesthetics* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Chapter 5. Louis Laloy, for example, opined that the Requiem was "the music of the Elysian field; the tender gravity and soft sadness of [it] remind me more of Athenian tombs than of the edifying sculptures of the portals of our churches…. And this conception of Paradise is not so far removed as one might believe from orthodox Catholicism; certainly it is more Catholic than Protestant since it is somewhat pagan in character." Quoted in Caballero, *Fauré and French Musical Aesthetics*, 188.

[108] For a thorough discussion of *La Chanson d'Ève* and religion, see Caballero, *Fauré and French Musical Aesthetics*, 198–207.

Camille Bellaigue, for example, in his review of the 1909 production in *La Revue des deux mondes*, opined that, although the religion of the priests in *The Magic Flute* was unclear (i.e., only quasi-Christian), the emotions their music expressed were clear. "Who can deny" he asked, "that their sublime songs breathe the very essence, or the ideal, of religious sentiment!"[109] This pantheist sentiment towards the work allowed *The Magic Flute* to offer a moral message not only from an orthodox standpoint, but also from a more generally religious, or quasi-religious, perspective.

*The Magic Flute* represented for many critics a chance to redeem Mozart's failing image at the *fin de siècle*. It was everything his other operas were not: its characters upheld Republican ideas of gender roles, and its content was both explicitly moral and implicitly religious. Its "purity" and "simplicity" recalled nineteenth-century descriptions of the "sublime," tying the work to Berliozian ideals of aesthetic merit. The work's success at the Opéra-Comique seemed a sure thing. But even these elements could not save the work entirely. Two main issues caused problems for the opera's reception: first, despite the "positive" aspects of the gender and religious aspects of the work, audiences and critics alike were unprepared for the vast differences between the "Romantic" version of the opera with which they were familiar and the "authentic" production seen in 1909. Second, the work (like its composer) was an uncomfortable "Germanness" that colored its reception in the nationalistic climate of turn-of-the-century Paris.

[109] *La Revue des deux mondes*, 1 July 1909. "Mais qui niera que leurs sublimes cantiques respirent l'essence même ou l'idéal du sentiment religieux!"

*Issues of Authenticity*

The idea of "authenticity" became a major focus of *The Magic Flute*'s critical reception. Contrary to expectations, however—and very unlike the discussion surrounding *Don Giovanni* at the *fin de siècle*—this discourse revolved almost entirely around the libretto, rather than the music. Few critics of the 1909 production even felt obliged to mention the performance save for a few perfunctory lines at the end of reviews, and stylistic authenticity was seldom a major concern.[110] As long as it was by Mozart, it would seem, critics were willing to accept the new production's music without too much question.

The question of the new libretto's "authenticity," however, put Carré into an impossible position. He was forced, in effect, to choose between presenting an "eighteenth-century" *La Flûte enchantée* and the more Romantic interpretation most audiences were familiar with. Using the same libretto as the previous productions of *La Flûte enchantée* was guaranteed to irk critics like Fauré, who demanded respect to Mozart's original version. On the other hand, deviating from the well-loved nineteenth-century libretto was likely to alienate more traditional audience members. Carré ultimately opted in favor of "authenticity" and commissioned Paul Ferrier (who later translated *Don Giovanni* for the 1912 production) and Alexandre Bisson to create a new,

[110] Victor Debay, writing in *Le Courrier musical*, was one of the few who challenged the production on musical grounds, and his complaints were more about the performers than the score itself: "With the exception of M. Fugère, who has the style, all the performers of this reprise have lost, if they ever had it, their sense of classical music in general, and of Mozart in particular. They do not know how to draw out a harmonious and flexible line, they do not understand the nobility and simplicity of form, they feel neither the touching grace nor the delicate joy, and finally, they do not love that pure melody that pours out of the most sensible of hearts, in that style of melancholy tenderness of which *La Flûte enchantée* was the final sigh." ["A l'exception de M. Fugère, qui a du style, tous les artistes de cette reprise, s'ils l'eurent quelquefois, on à jamais perdu le sens de la musique classique en général et de celle de Mozart en particulier. Ils n'en savent pas dessiner la ligne harmonieuse et souple, ils n'en comprennent pas la noblesse et la simplicité de forme, ils n'en sentent ni la grâce émue ni la joie délicate, ils n'aiment pas enfin cette mélodie pure où s'est épanché le plus sensible des cœurs, en des accents d'une mélancolique tendresse dont la *Flûte enchantée* fut le dernier soupir."]

more faithful, translation for the Opéra-Comique production. This new translation became a focus of critical attention on the production—for some critics, it was their sole focus. Henri de Curzon, writing in the *Le Guide musical*, noted that "the principal interest of this new production to provide us *for the first time* in France with the authentic state of this radiant masterwork."[111]

The new, "authentic" version of the libretto met with approval from a number of critics. De Curzon, for one, praised Carré highly:

> It was up to Albert Carré, resolved to take up Mozart's opera, to not allow an insufficiently informed public to persist in misunderstanding [the work] any longer. Rejecting the previous version, he asked for the help of Paul Ferrier and Alexandre Bisson in preparing a complete translation of the German text, simply cleared up in places or cut. Performed in four acts and sixteen scenes…*La Flûte enchantée* is presented to us in all its poetry, in all its original character. We cannot thank the director of the Opéra-Comique enough.[112]

Here the new translation serves a civic function: it liberates French audiences from the misunderstanding of the work that had plagued nineteenth-century productions, and presented modern audiences with the "authentic" work as created by Mozart. Fauré, not surprisingly, echoed these sentiments in *Le Figaro*, pointing out with relish that the 1909 production was "a work restored to its original severity, thanks to a new and faithful

[111] *Le Guide musical*, 6 and 13 June 1909. "l'interêt principal de cette reprise est de nous donner *pour la première fois* en France l'état authentique du radieux chef-d'œuvre." (Emphasis original.)

[112] *Le Guide musical*, 6 and 13 June 1909. "Il appartenait à M. Albert Carré, décidé à reprendre l'œuvre de Mozart, de ne pas laisser subsister plus longtemps le malentendu que pouvait en concevoir un public insuffisamment averti. Rejetant la version précédente, il a demandé à la collaboration de MM. Paul Ferrier et Alexandre Bisson, la traduction intégrale du texte allemand simplement éclairci, par endroits ou allégé. Jouée en quatre actes et seize tableaux…*La Flûte enchantée* nous est rendue dans toute sa poésie, dans tout son caractère original. Nous ne saurions trop en remercier le directeur de l'Opéra-Comique."

version...that is going to distance us finally and forever from the extraordinarily arbitrary fantasies of Nuitter and Beaumont, which date from 1865."[113]

This concern for the "authenticity" of the production was unusual for *fin-de-siècle* France. Of the eighteenth-century composers that I discuss in relation to the Operatic Museum, only Mozart's operas had to be restored in such a fashion.[114] Both Gluck's and Rameau's works were already in French, and had never had their libretti significantly altered during the nineteenth century (at least as far as the plots were concerned). This restoration was, however, problematic for many French critics for two main reasons. First, many French critics (and audience members) were fond of the familiar French version of the opera, created by Charles Nuitter and Alexandre Beaumont for the Carvalho production at the Théâtre-Lyriqe in 1865. This version differed significantly from the German text. As the critic Louis Weill put it in a 1909 article on the history of the work's libretto in France: "The [1865] libretto by Nuitter and Beaumont…is less an

[113] *Le Figaro*, 1 June 1909. Reprinted in Fauré, *Opinions musicales*, 94. "une pièce rétablie dans sa sévérité première, grâce à une nouvelle et fidèle version…qui va nous éloigner enfin et pour toujours des fantaisies extraordinairement arbitraires de MM. Niutter et Beaumont, lesquelles datent de 1865."

[114] Mozart's situation was, however, bore some similarity to that of Carl Maria von Weber during this time. Several of Weber's works were "translated" and adapted for the French operatic scene of the 1820s and 1830s. *Der Freischütz*, known in France for much of the nineteenth century as *Robin des bois*, underwent a series of translations of varying popularity for decades, finally achieving a "restoration" similar to that of *The Magic Flute* in the early twentieth century, appearing in 1913 at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées in what J.G. Prud'homme referred to approvingly as a "faithful translation." J.G. Prud'homme, "The Works of Weber in France (1824–1926)," *The Musical Quarterly* 14 (1928), 375. Prud'homme notes that the increased interest in a "German" Weber in *fin-de-siècle* France was a facet of public interest in Wagner. Despite Weber's appeal, however, Prud'homme noted that "for reasons deriving from the very essence of Weber's art, together with difficulties of staging and the virtual impossibility of interesting (without mutilating the score) the French public in these librettos, so foreign to our traditional comedy-opera and grand opera, it seems unlikely that Weber will enjoy the renewal of favor by which Mozart, his cousin and elder, is benefitting nowadays" (384). On Weber's adaptation for early nineteenth-century France, see also Mark Everist, "Translating Weber's *Euryanthe*: German Romanticism at the Dawn of French *Grand Opéra*," *Revue de Musicologie* 87 (2001): 67–104; and Annegret Fauser, "Phantasmagorie im deutschen Wald? Zur *Freischütz*-Rezeption in London und Paris 1824," in *Deutsche Meister-böse Geister? Nationale Selbstfindung in der Musik*, ed. Hermann Danuser and Herfried Münkler (Schliengen: Edition Argus, 2001), 245–73.

adaptation than a complete rewrite of the German text."[115] Weill went on to list many of the main alterations to the plot: Prince Tamino is made into a fisherman, and Pamina into the daughter of his neighbor, an elderly widow. The Queen of the Night, still a major antagonist, here becomes a jealous rival for Tamino's affection. The French libretto, in short, bore very little resemblance to *Die Zauberflöte*. Compare, for example, the original German text of the Queen of the Night's celebrated aria "Der Hölle Rache" to the 1865 Nuitter/Beaumont edition:

| | |
|---|---|
| Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen, | Hell's Revenge cooks in my heart, |
| Tot und Verzweiflung flammet um mich her! | Death and despair flame about me! |
| Fühlt nicht durch dich Sarastro | If Sarastro does not by your hand feel |
| Todesschmerzen, | The pain of death, |
| So bist du meine Tochter nimmermehr. | Then you will no longer be my daughter. |
| Verstoßen sei auf ewig, | May you be forever disowned, |
| Verlassen sei auf ewig, | May you be forever abandoned, |
| Zertrümmert sei'n auf ewig | Be forever destroyed |
| Alle Bande der Natur | All the bonds of nature, |
| Wenn nicht durch dich | If Sarastro does not by your hand |
| Sarastro wird erblassen! | Become pale [as death]! |
| Hört, Rachegötter, | Hear, Gods of Revenge, |
| Hört der Mutter Schwur! | Hear a mother's oath! |

| | |
|---|---|
| Oui, devant toi tu vois une rivale, | Yes, you see before you a rival, |
| Son amour même est un crime à mes yeux! | Your very love is a crime in my eyes! |
| Et ma fureur, à mon amour égale, | And my rage, at my equal love, |
| Abaissera ton front audacieux! | Will bring down your audacious façade! |
| Bientôt c'est moi qu'il aimera! | Soon it is I who will love him! |
| Oui, ma haine vous perdra! | Yes, my hatred will defeat you! |
| Oui, tous deux vous frappera, | Yes, you both will be struck, |
| En moi je sens d'avance | I feel in advance |

[115] Weill continued, "The authors cared nothing for Schikaneder's intentions; still less about the origins of the fable. They cut out of the original scenes without respect to their model. They even distorted the plot, to the point of rendering it incomprehensible…" This article appeared in *La Revue musicale* in two parts, in April and May 1909. This quotation is taken from the second installment. ["Le livret de Nuitter et Beaumont…est moins une adaptation qu'une refonte du texte allemand. Les auteurs ne sont guère souciés des intentions de Schikaneder ; encore moins des origines de la fable. Ils ont taillé dans la donnée originale des scènes sans rapport avec le modèle. Ils ont même dénaturé l'intrigue, au point de la rendre incompréhensible…."]

| | |
|---|---|
| L'espoir de la vengeance, | The hope of vengeance, |
| Le traître qui m'offense | The traitor who offends me |
| Périra, j'en fais serment, | Will perish, I swear it, |
| Non, rien, ne peut fléchir ma haine! | No, nothing can weaken my hatred! |
| Sa perte est certaine, | Your defeat is certain, |
| Oui, la mort t'attend! | Yes, death awaits you! |

Here the central struggle between Sarastro and the Queen of the Night, the focus of the German text and, arguably, the central point of the opera's message—encapsulating, as it does, the struggle between light and darkness, good and evil—become in the French version part of a typical Opéra Comique love triangle. This type of alteration is entirely typical of the Nuitter/Beaumont version of *The Magic Flute*.

Despite the "inauthenticity" of its libretto, however, several *fin-de-siècle* reviewers waxed nostalgic about the 1865 production as well as its revival at the Opéra-Comique (also under Carvalho) in 1879. Adolphe Jullien, for example, began his review of the 1909 *Flûte enchantée* by reminiscing on these productions:

> *La Flûte enchantée*, one of the greatest successes of the Théâtre-Lyrique before the war, one of the most profitable at the Opéra-Comique after 1870, but which found much less success when Carvalho, always faithful to the works that he was the first to present…staged a final production at the end of 1892. Alas, how long ago this was![116]

Given their degree of attachment to the Nuitter/Beaumont libretto, many critics were likely predisposed to dislike the new translation. The "inautheticity" of the libretto was either ignored or actively preferred to the "authentic" 1909 version. In fact, as the new

[116] *Le Journal des débats*, 13 June 1909. "*La Flûte enchantée*, un des plus grands succès du Théâtre-Lyrique avant la guerre, un des spectacles les plus fructueux de l'Opéra-Comique après 1870, mais dont le succès fut beaucoup moindres lorsque Carvalho, toujours fidèle aux pièces qu'il avait représentées le premier…en fit une dernière reprise à la fin de l'année 1892. Qu'elles étaient loin, hélas!"

Opéra-Comique production approached, the libretto became a major battle ground in the press.

The main problem with the new libretto, it would seem, was its authenticity. As we saw with *Don Juan* around the turn of the twentieth century, after *La Flûte enchantée*'s patina of Romanticism was removed, the work's plot could not stand up to modern tastes. The oddity of the original libretto, in short, was simply too much for many critics. The critic Victor Debay singled out the libretto when seeking the cause of his "ennui" during the 1909 production:

> The first [reason for my displeasure] is the insanity of Schikaneder's libretto, which has been reworked without wit by Paul Ferrier and Alexandre Bisson. One would be in the right to expect from them something besides flat physical humor that would not even make the schoolboys at the Sunday matinees smile. … [Carré] agreed to be indulgent towards the adapters who sought, out of respect that it does not deserve, to come closer to the original version. Who can be interested in the quarrel between Monsieur the Sun and Madame the Moon as they argue over their daughter Pamina; in the trials imposed on the lover Tamino in order to win over the gracious child of the Day and the Night? When this fable appeared in 1791, the political allusions that one could discover in it, one claims—the on-stage representation of certain rites of Freemasonry that follow, in the mystery of its meetings, a philanthropic end—constitute a topic of which all times are fond, and this must explain the success that, aside from the score, that Schikaneder's libretto obtained. But it is nothing more today than tedious verbiage that damages the exquisite pages of music that it separates. Between some heavenly minutes it imposes quarter-hours of yawns. The supreme intervention of Ferrier and Bisson would have been more useful in replacing by energetic scissor cuts, cutting everything in Schikaneder's dialogue that is unnecessary or makes no sense, and, since there is almost no action, there would be nothing left except the sung part, which has the delicate and ideal meaning that Mozart's genius adds to the hollow words.[117]

[117] *Le Courrier musical*, 15 June 1909. "La première est l'insanité du livret de Schikaneder, qu'ont remanié sans esprit MM. Paul Ferrier et Alexandre Bisson. On était en droit d'attendre d'eux autre chose que de plates facéties qui ne feraient même pas sourire des collégiens aux matinées du dimanche. Mais ils avaient à lécher un ours dont ils n'étaient pas le père, et il convient d'être indulgent pour des adaptateurs qui ont cherché, par un respect qu'elle ne méritait pas, à se rapprocher de la version primitive. Qui peut s'intéresser

Particularly significant in Debay's diatribe is the fact that blame for the opera's failure to please is placed entirely on Emanuel Schikaneder's German libretto, rather than on Mozart's "heavenly" music. In Debay's view, the "authenticity" sought by Ferrier and Bisson (and, by extension, by Carré)—and supported by critics like Fauré and de Curzon—was a serious mistake from an aesthetic stance. What modern audiences, Debay asks, could possibly be interested in the opera's *actual* plot. Mozart's music deserved something better than the "real" libretto to which it had been set, which was not only nonsensical but also—far worse—boring. This latter claim was made by several influential critics, including Jullien, who opined in *Le Journal des débats* that "there is not to be found a single interesting scene in *La Flûte enchantée*."[118]

Georges Pioch even went so far as to assert that the main problem with the 1909 production must be the translation, since surely Mozart must not have been involved with such a trivial work:

> French adapters always refuse to discern the true strength of will to which Mozart attests. Bisson and Ferrier have sought above all to amuse, to "modernize"…. Without doubt, the adaptation by Bisson and Ferrier constitutes, as far as the clarity of the conversation is concerned, progress

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à la querelle de Monsieur le Soleil et de Madame la Lune se disputant leur fille Pamina, aux épreuves imposées à l'amoureux Tamino pour conquérir la gracieuse enfant du Jour et de la Nuit ? Lors de l'apparition de cette fable, en 1791, les allusions politiques qu'on y découvrait, prétend-on, la figuration sur un théâtre de certains rites de la Franc-maçonnerie qui poursuivait alors, dans le mystère de ses séances, un but philanthropique, constituaient une actualité dont toutes les époques sont friandes, et cela doit expliquer le succès, qu'en dehors de la partition, remporta le livret de Schikaneder. Mais il n'est plus aujourd'hui qu'un fastidieux verbiage qui nuit à la musique dont il sépare les pages exquises. Entre des minutes divines il nous impose des quarts d'heure de bâillement. L'intervention suprême de MM. Ferrier et Bisson aurait été plus utilement remplacée par d'énergiques coups de ciseau supprimant dans le dialogue de Schikaneder tout ce qui n'est pas nécessaire ou n'a pas de sens, et, comme l'action est à peu près nulle, il ne serait resté que la partie chanté, qui elle, a la délicate et idéale signification que le génie de Mozart ajoutait aux vaines paroles."

[118] *Le Journal des débats*, 13 June 1909. "dans *la Flûte enchantée* il ne se rencontre pas une seule scène intéressante."

> over the version by Nuitter and Beaumont. But this progress is cruelly compensated by the stupefying language spoken by Tamino, Pamina, and all the other inhabitants of this poetic Fairyland. Does there not exist a "serious" adaptation of *la Flûte enchantée*?[119]

Here the critic refuses to believe that the new translation of the work is "authentic," preferring the view that French adapters have always been unable to understand the work fully. In search of a deeper message to the music of *The Magic Flute*, Pioch demanded a "serious" adaptation.

Even de Curzon was willing to admit the work's faults, but he refused to allow critics to place the blame on any "inauthenticity" of the production:

> In order to maintain giving a *faithful* impression of the original spoken text in the German work—because it was much more faithful than certain "informed" critics who have certainly not read the German have affected to believe; it was faithful all the way until its faults, its clumsiness, and its needless length—M. Albert Carré has demanded a bit too much of the attention, easily lost, of the current public…Let us hope, for the honor of the public, the Mozart's masterwork should from now on be definitively fixed in the repertoire, where it is one of the purest joys, and among the best staged.[120]

[119] *Musica*, July 1909. "Les adaptateurs français se sont toujours refusés à discerner la véritable volonté dont témoigna Mozart. MM. Bisson et Ferrier ont voulu surtout faire amusant, 'moderniser'… Sans doute, l'adaptation de MM. Bisson et Ferrier constitue, quant à la clarté de l'affabulation, un progrès sur l'ouvrage de Nuitter et Beaumont. Mais il est, ce progrès, cruellement compensé par l'ahurissant langage que parle Tamino, Pamina, et tous les habitants de la poétique féerie. N'existe-t-il donc pas d'adaptation « sérieuse » de *la Flûte enchantée*?"

[120] *Le Guide musical*, 26 September and 3 October 1909. (Henri de Curzon) Pour avoir tenu à donner une impression *fidèle* du texte original parlé de l'œuvre allemande, —car, pour fidèle, elle l'était, beaucoup plus que certains critiques « avertis », mais qui n'avaient certainement pas lu l'allemand, ont affecté de le croire ; elle l'était jusque dans ses défauts, ses lourdeurs et ses inutiles longueurs, —M. Albert Carré avait un peu trop demandé à l'attention, facilement lassée, du public courant. … Souhaitons, pour l'honneur du public, que le chef-d'œuvre de Mozart soit désormais définitivement fixé au répertoire, dont il est un des plus purs joyaux, et des mieux mis en scène.

De Curzon lambasts those critics that derided the "authenticity" of the 1909 production; if they found the plot ridiculous, it was because it was that way in the original German version.

As we have seen, this fact was a hard truth for some critics to accept. The contrast between the authenticity and moral purity they (and presumably audiences) wanted from *The Magic Flute* and the debatably incoherent spectacle with which they were presented was a major problem for *fin-de-siècle* critics. Once again, a primary—if unspoken—issue became the conflict between Classical and Romantic interpretations of Mozart. Critics (and audiences) were satisfied that *The Magic Flute* deserved a place in the Operatic Museum, but whose *Magic Flute* should it be? The familiar 1865 version, with its typical Opéra-Comique plot conventions and heavily adapted score, situated the work comfortably within French historical traditions. This was the same Romantic Mozart who had produced *Don Juan*, not *Don Giovanni*, the same Mozart who had been idealized by Gounod and countless other critics from the midcentury on. On the other hand, the "authentic" 1909 libretto and score, more in line with the eighteenth-century, suggested an eighteenth-century Mozart—which, paradoxically, was also a "modern" Mozart. Significantly, what many critics thought of as the "authenticity" of the work, Pioch (quoted above) saw instead as its "modernization," a rejection of nineteenth-century conceptions about *The Magic Flute*. For Pioch, the "Classical" aesthetic was an inherently modern one; this view is supported, of course, by the number of *fin-de-siècle* composers who embraced "neoclassical" styles and forms—including a number of those who, like Hahn and Fauré, were vital in their advocacy for an "authentic" Mozart.

This dichotomy was complicated further by issues of nationality inherent in these two versions of the opera. The 1865 version, by its adapted (adopted?) nature, became a "French" work, a work fundamentally altered (much as Gluck's operas were) for French audiences. The 1909 version, however, with its explicit emphasis on adhering to the original—foreign—subject matter, removed the safety of this Gallic patina. And while the presence of Mozart's other operatic works on Parisian stages (particularly *Don Juan*) was justified by their "universal" or at least "pan-European" character, *The Magic Flute* was unambiguously Germanic. The resistance by many critics against imported German opera at this time led to a somewhat suspicious attitude towards the 1909 production, coming as it did amid a tide of French nationalist sentiment.

## The Magic Flute *and "The German Style"*

In part because of the critical focus on the work's "authentic"—and thus necessarily Germanized— libretto, the 1909 production of *La Flûte enchantée* raised a number of questions regarding the opera's national origins. Many critics classified *The Magic Flute* as the first German opera, placing it at the beginning of a music-historical narrative that led through Beethoven (and, to a lesser extent, Weber) to Wagner. De Curzon cited the work's "caractère national" in his review, which goes on to summarizes *The Magic Flute*'s historical and geopolitical position: "Just as he created in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* the first *German* opéra-bouffe, he created in *The Magic Flute* the first *German* opera, Romantic and popular, and independent of any other style."[121] Here the Wagnerian

[121] *Le Guide musical*, 6 and 13 June 1909. "Comme il avait fait de l'*Enlèvement au Sérail* le premier opéra-bouffe *allemand*, il avait fait de la *Flûte enchantée* le premier opéra *allemand*, romantique et populaire, et indépendant de tout autre style."

de Curzon places the German operatic tradition on a pedestal—it takes the best of Gluck as well as Italian opera, and adds something Mozartean to create, one must infer, the perfect operatic form. De Curzon then offers evidence of the historical importance of *The Magic Flute* to composers of German opera, citing both Wagner and Beethoven:

> [Mozart's historical importance] is a bit like the idea that Wagner invoked when he wrote these oft-cited lines: "In truth, genius has here taken a giant step, almost too great; because, in creating German opera, Mozart gave at the same time the purest and the most accomplished style, so much that not only can he not be equaled, but, in this genre, there is no progress left to make.
>
> How many works in all the history of music can merit such dazzling praise?... We know that Beethoven equally shared this impression of national achievement and of this absolute masterwork: of all Mozart's works, *Die Zauberflöte* was his favorite.[122]

The endorsement of both Wagner and Beethoven was crucial to positioning Mozart as the progenitor of German national opera. Also significant for this purpose is the use of the opera's German title rather than the French translation, as was typical.

The goal of positioning Mozart in this way seems to have been a way of mitigating anti-German sentiment. Despite the issues surrounding his "Germanic" nature that I discuss earlier in this chapter, Mozart remained a popular composer in *fin-de-siècle* Paris, both in the opera house and in the concert hall.[123] Demonstrating that the German

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[122] *Le Guide musical*, 6 and 13 June 1909. "C'est un peu la même idée qu'évoqua Wagner le jour où il écrivit ces lignes, souvent citées: "En vérité, le génie a fait ici un pas de géant, et trop grand presque ; car, en créant l'opéra allemand, Mozart en donnait du même coup le type le plus pur et le plus accompli, tel que non seulement il ne pouvait être égalé, mais qu'il n'y avait plus, en ce genre, de progrès à faire."

Combien est-il d'œuvre, dans toute l'histoire de la musique, qui aient pu mériter un éloge aussi éclatant?... On sait que Beethoven eut également cette impression de conquête nationale et de chef-œuvre absolu : dans l'œuvre de Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte* avait toutes ses préférences."

[123] On the importance of Mozart's presence in the *fin-de-siècle* French concert hall, see Jess Tyre, **"**The Reception of German Instrumental Music in France between 1870 and 1914" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 2001), especially 204–14.

school of opera descended directly from him might have persuaded some critics to be more receptive to German opera (i.e., Wagner). On the other hand, given the wild popularity of Wagner's music-dramas with Parisian audiences during this time, perhaps the connection was intended to work from the other direction, and de Curzon hoped that enthusiasm for the Master of Bayreuth might transfer over to Mozart.

Whatever the reasons, other critics followed the same thread as de Curzon, and focused on the importance of *The Magic Flute* to German music. Edmond Stoullig, for example, wrote in the 1909 edition of *Les Annales du théâtre et de la musique* that:

> We have never attended a performance of *La Flûte enchantée* without being reminded of the words of Beethoven, who preferred this opera to all others by Mozart, "because," he said, "it is the only one in which Mozart showed himself to be truly German." In effect. After having attained the perfection of the Italian form in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and in *Don Giovanni*, he wrote *La Flûte enchantée* in a new style, more serious and more elevated. He had, moreover, full consciousness of this evolution, and the masterworks that he would have produced would probably have demonstrated a gradual expansion of this new manner.[124]

Stoullig suggests here that Mozart's turn to a "German" style, "more serious and more elevated" than his Italian works, was a significant step forward in the composer's development—an "evolution" of his style. The critic further asserts that Mozart would likely have abandoned his previous style completely and "demonstrated a gradual expansion of this new manner." Mozart, this perspective implies, was already marching down the path to Wagner at the time of his untimely death. This irredeemably Germanic

[124] *Les Annales du théâtre et de la musique* (1909), 114–15. "Nous n'avons jamais assisté à une représentation de la *Flûte enchantée* sans nous rappeler la parole de Beethoven, qui préférait cet opéra à tous les autres de Mozart "parce que, disait-il, c'est le seul dans lequel Mozart se soit véritablement montré allemand." En effet, après avoir réalisé la perfection de la forme italienne dans les *Nozze di Figaro* et dans *Don Giovanni*, il avait écrit la *Flûte enchantée* dans un style nouveau, plus grave et plus élevé. Il avait d'ailleurs pleine conscience de cette évolution, et les chefs-d'œuvre qu'il eût pu produire encore l'eussent probablement montré élargissant de plus en plus cette nouvelle manière."

view of Mozart was directly at odds with the "pan-European" or even "universal" image of the composer maintained in France throughout much of the nineteenth century.

Critics found a number of ways to deal with the "German" nature of *The Magic Flute*. Jullien, for example, flatly denied any suggestion that the work was composed in a different style from Mozart's other works:

> It is very fashionable, assuredly, when one must speak of *La Flûte enchantée*, to repeat the phrase attributed to Beethoven, who preferred it, one says, for being the only opera in which Mozart showed himself to be truly German; but it is difficult to justify this appreciation, at least if one points to anything but the libretto, and I am amazed to see the infinitely subtle distinctions by which too-ingenious exegetes think to demonstrate that a considerable difference exists between the Italian style of *Les Noces de Figaro* or *Don Juan* and the German style of *La Flûte enchantée*. In reality, Mozart has the same style for these three works…[125]

For Jullien, the real difference between *The Magic Flute* and Mozart's other operas was a difference in the quality of composition. *The Magic Flute* was simply inferior to these other works—something that other critics, too obsessed with Mozart's "divinity," could not admit. Thus, these critics blamed the opera's poor quality on some imagined "German style."

But while Jullien sought to eradicate the notion of a "German" *Magic Flute*, at least one major critic sought to spin that same characteristic in positive way for French music history. In a 1909 *La Revue musicale* article entitled "Sources of Inspiration in Mozart's *La Flûte enchantée*," the well-known musicologist Henri Quittard attempted to

[125] *Le Journal des débats*, 13 June 1909. "Il est très commode, assurément, quand on doit parle de *la Flûte enchantée*, de répéter le mot attribué à Beethoven, qui la préférait, dit-on, comme étant le seul opéra dans lequel Mozart fût montre franchement Allemand ; mais il est malaisé de justifier cette appréciation, si tant est qu'elle vise autre chose que le poème, et je suis émerveille de voir par quelles distinctions infiniment subtiles de trop ingénieux exégètes pensent arriver à démontrer qu'il existe une différence considérable entre le style italien des *Noces de Figaro* ou de *Don Juan* et le style allemand de *la Flûte enchantée*. En réalité, Mozart a pour ces trois ouvrages le même style…."

position the opera historically. He began by agreeing with Beethoven and Wagner that Mozart had initiated the German operatic school:

> The work announces the birth of a new art. In some respects, it so clearly presents la voice in which Germanic composers from then on searched for the expansion of their temperament that no one could ever mistake here. German opera was born, and Beethoven was the first to recognize it here. *Fidelio, Der Freischütz, Euryanthe,* all musical Romanticism for which the nineteenth century reserved such a magnificent flowering are found in embryonic form in the fairyland that Mozart illustrated in his divine music.[126]

Seemingly this position would identify the work as irredeemably German; as we have seen, a number of other critics identified the work as a German opera. Quittard, however, sought to turn *The Magic Flute*'s position as the "first German opera" to the advantage of the French. In his article, he discovered the four major influences on Mozart's "new" musical style. Two were clearly German: the Lied and Bach's chorales.

Surprisingly, however, the other two influences were French. The first of these was the eighteenth-century opéra-comique:

> It even seems that the composer has borrowed something, without doubt from the conventional, albeit touching, sensibility of certain French ariettas. This should not be too surprising. Although he always showed much ill will towards our music in his letters, Mozart could not help but know it fairly well. I mean the music, at least, that constitutes the repertoire of the Opéra-Comique. He had to hear it reasonably often during his travels to Paris in 1778. He had in his library, until his death, various scores from that school, notably the works of Grétry. … And all the small repertoire of the national *Singspiel,* the German operetta that the

[126] *La Revue musicale*, 15 June 1909. "L'œuvre annonce la naissance d'un art nouveau. Par certain côtés, elle fait si clairement pressentir la voie dans laquelle les compositeurs germanique vont désormais chercher l'expansion de leur tempérament, que personne, jamais, n'a pu s'y méprendre. L'opéra allemand est né et Beethoven, le premier, l'a su reconnaître. *Fidelio*, le *Freyschutz, Euryanthe,* tout le romantisme musical à qui le XIXe siècle réserve une floraison si magnifique, sont en germe dans la féerie que Mozart illustra de sa divine musique."

> composer Adam Hiller exemplifies, was greatly inspired by French traditions.[127]

Thus, although Mozart repeatedly expressed disdain for French musical styles, he was (perhaps unconsciously) influenced by them in the "new" style he created for German opera.

The second specifically French influence on *The Magic Flute*, according to Quittard, was Gluck. Mozart could have seen *Armide*, *Alceste*, *Orphée*, and *Iphigénie en Tauride* during his second trip to Paris, and he studied those works for the rest of his life. Quittard even points to specific parts of Mozart's opera; he describes the beginning of the first act as "*purement Gluckiste*."[128] "Assuredly," Quittard concluded, "his admiration for the French opera of Gluck strongly counterbalanced in Mozart's thought the adoration that he had for Italian art."[129]

Quittard's musicological argument had more far-reaching consequences than straightforward stylistic analysis of Mozart's work. As the "first German opera," *The Magic Flute* occupied a unique and important historical position, one to which the two most influential German musicians of the nineteenth century—Beethoven and Wagner—traced their compositional heritage. Demonstrating, as Quittard had done, that this opera

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[127] *La Revue musicale*, 15 June 1909. "il semblerait même que le compositeur ait emprunté quelque chose à la sensibilité conventionnelle sans doute, mais touchante, de certaines ariettes françaises. Cela n'aurait rien qui doive beaucoup surprendre. Encore qu'il ait, dans ses lettres, montré toujours beaucoup de malveillance à notre musique, Mozart ne laissait pas de la connaître assez bien. Je veux dire, du moins, celle qui constituait le répertoire de l'Opéra-Comique. Il avait dû en entendre passablement pendant son séjour à Paris en 1778. Il a possédé jusqu'à sa mort, en sa bibliothèque, diverses partitions de cette école, des œuvres de Grétry notamment. … Et tout le menu répertoire du *Singspiel* national, de l'opérette allemande où s'illustrait le compositeur Adam Hiller, s'était grandement inspiré des traditions françaises."

[128] *La Revue musicale*, 15 June 1909.

[129] *La Revue musicale*, 15 June 1909. "Assurément son admiration pour l'opéra français de Gluck contrebalançait fortement alors dans la pensée de Mozart le culte qu'il avait eu jusqu'alors pour l'art italien."

was heavily influenced by French musical styles put an entirely different spin on the historical narrative of nineteenth-century opera. If Mozart imitated French musical styles in *The Magic Flute*, then in imitating Mozart all other German Romantic composers also borrowed from French sources. Demonstrating that the music of the dreaded "invasion germanique" was derived from French sources would have been a serious boon to French national national narratives of music history.

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Quittard's claim that *The Magic Flute* was a work shaped by Gluck's operas raises a significant question. Every aspect of Mozart's work that seemed particularly appealing to many *fin-de-siècle* critics and audiences—its musical "purity" and "clarity," its traditional gender roles, its quasi-religious component, and its generally somber theme of spiritual conflict and triumph—Gluck's operas possessed in abundance. Furthermore, Gluck's works had none of the drawbacks of *The Magic Flute*: the plots of his works were both familiar and unquestionably coherent, the music was already "authentic," and his status as an adopted "French" composer meant that the issue of importing German opera was moot. The question, then, was why to produce *The Magic Flute* at all? Why, when Gluck's French operas were so well respected and readily available, should opera producers bother trying to redeem Mozart's inherently problematic work?

These questions evidently occurred to the producers of the Opéra and Opéra-Comique, as well. Beginning with a new production of *Orphée et Eurydice* in 1896, Gluck's works dominated the opera houses of Paris for more than a decade. During that

time, each of his five French masterworks received a lavish new production, even as Mozart's operas received comparably little attention from either critics or audiences. As we will see, Gluck's works exerted an extraordinary attraction on audiences seeking music that reflected the socio-cultural climate of *fin-de-siècle* France—something Mozart's works, for all their unquestionable historical importance, could not offer.

## CHAPTER 3

## GLUCK

After the success of *Orphée* at the Théâtre-Lyrique in 1859 and *Alceste* at the Opéra in 1861 (and to a lesser extent in 1866), it seemed as though Gluck might be on the path to becoming a regular feature in the repertoires of the Paris opera houses. The critical reception of these productions certainly should have encouraged such a result—recall, for example, the appeals for a "Louvre lyrique" (discussed in Chapter 1) in response to the 1861 *Alceste*. And yet after the 1866 production, Gluck's works again retreated from the opera theaters of Paris, this time for a full three decades. Beginning in 1896, however, his operas returned in force to the Parisian music scene, and over the course of little more than a decade each of his five major operas—*Orphée et Eurydice*, *Alceste*, *Armide*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*, and *Iphigénie en Aulide*—received a high-profile revival. This chapter is aimed at explaining Gluck's sudden return to prominence at the *fin de siècle*, and how that return contributed to the development of the Operatic Museum.

For *fin-de siècle* critics and audiences, Gluck was without doubt one of the most important musical figures in French music history. As such, he was a crucial part of how these groups interpreted the glories of France's musical past and present, and how they hoped to shape its future. Several elements recur in the reception of the Gluck revival in turn-of-the-century Paris: a perceived connection between Gluck and the golden age of French theater (in particular to Corneille), the composer's relationship to Wagner, and the

ways in which the subject material for his works fit fortuitously into a vogue for ancient Greek themes. These last two lines of reception in particular were crucial in the presentation of Gluck's "classic" works as being, if not themselves modern, then at least relevant to modern audiences. This combination of antiquity and modernity was an important element of establishing an effective Operatic Museum, where works from France's past could connect with audiences and artistic trends of the present. In the case study of this chapter, I examine in more detail the process of modernizing the 1896 production of *Orphée* at the Opéra-Comique, which in many ways set the tone for the Gluck revival of the following decades. Before turning to *fin-de-siècle* productions of Gluck's operas, however, I first address Gluck's place outside the opera houses: in the concert hall and in the library.

**Gluck in the Concert Hall**

Even though Gluck had disappeared from the opera stage, audiences had ample opportunity to hear his music in another setting: the concert hall. The nineteenth century saw a proliferation of major concert series, several of which provided weekly concerts of major orchestral and operatic works for much of the year. The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, historically fairly conservative in its repertoire, continued to toe the canonical line through the end of the century. Newer concert societies engaged in more daring programming choices: these include the Concerts Pasdeloup, Concerts Colonne, and the Concerts Lamoureux, begun in 1861, 1873, and 1881 respectively.[1] Each of these

[1] Despite their vast importance to turn-of-the-century cultural life in Paris, these concert series have been insufficiently studied. Exceptions to this notably lacuna include D. Kern Holoman's detailed *The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, 1828–196*7 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004); Élisabeth Bernard, "Jules Pasdeloup et les concerts populaires," *Revue de musicologie* 57 (1971):

series was instrumental in bringing to Parisian audiences not only new music—most notably Wagner—but also in performing seldom-heard excerpts of *musique ancienne*, a vague category that seems to have stretched from the Renaissance to, in some cases, the middle of the nineteenth century. The importance of concert series in spreading and popularizing these works to a large middle-class audience can hardly be overstated. The price of seats at the public concert series were significantly lower than those at either the Opéra or Opéra-Comique, allowing wider access to music across class boundaries. Furthermore, these lower prices might have tempted audiences to take chances on music with which they were unfamiliar, rather than sticking to the main repertoires of the music theaters. For these reasons, concert series were often used to prepare Parisian audiences for new or unusual works at the Opéra or Opéra-Comique. Excerpts from Wagner's music dramas, for example, were played more or less constantly in Paris from the late 1870s on, with the assumption that the public, once familiar with Wagner's style and portions of his operas, would be more willing to accept complete productions at the Opéra.

Early music—aside from the few excerpts from Gluck's operas that had been endlessly recycled since the early nineteenth century—was featured prominently in a similar way. Often, selected examples of *musique ancienne* were presented as an entertaining yet educational aspect of programs, aimed at improving the popular taste and instructing listeners in the glories of French music history, and thus of France itself.[2] Jane

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150–78; and Jann Pasler, "Building a Public for Orchestral Music: Les Concerts Colonne," in *Concert et public: Mutation de la vie musicale en Europe de 1780 à 1914*, ed. Hans-Erich Bödeker, Patrice Veit, and Michael Werner (Paris: Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2002), 209–40.

[2] Jann Pasler addresses the educational aims of these concert series in her "Concert Programs and Their Narratives as Emblems of Ideology," in *Writing Through Music: Essays on Music, Culture, and Politics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 365–416.

Fulcher, for example, has pointed out that towards the end of the century, "Nationalists…turned to culture as an effective but oblique means through which pertinaciously to disseminate and subtly insinuate the political values they still hoped to diffuse"—a process that relied heavily on concert series to reach fruition. "By the time of World War I," Fulcher continues, "the results of such precedents would by clearly evident in a proliferation of politically pedagogical concerts designed to inseminate a sense of 'French values.'"[3]

Gluck's music played a major role in this process. In this context, where entertainment and education went hand in hand, audiences were treated largely to short excerpts from the composer's operas, usually removed from any dramatic context. The composer was a regular feature on the programs of the influential Société des Concerts, for example, throughout the 1870s and 1880s (see Table 3.1). The most popular selections on that series were instrumental: the "Entrée d'Orphée aux Champs-Elysées," the Overture to *Iphigénie en Aulide*, and excerpts from the ballet of the same opera. These excerpts avoided, by and large, the main issue of Gluck reception in the 1860s: the focus on Gluck's dramatic principles and their proximity (or lack thereof) to those of Wagner. Gradually, the instrumental excerpts began to give way to longer sections of Gluck's works, although the "fragments du ballet" from *Iphigénie en Aulide* remained popular until the turn of the century at the Société des Concerts. In the 1890s, selected scenes became complete acts, often corresponding to the works being produced at the Opéra or Opéra-Comique.

[3] Jane Fulcher, "The Concert as Political Propaganda in France and the Control of 'Performative Context'," *Musical Quarterly* 82 (1998), 43, 57.

But even these lengthier excerpts (or even complete unstaged performances) lacked the dramatic possibilities of fully staged productions. Edme-Marie-Ernest Deldevez, who was for many years the director of the Société des Concerts, wrote in 1887 that

> One regrets, it is endlessly repeated, that the Opéra does not occupy itself with the revival of *Armide*, *La Vestale* [by Spontini], and *Fernand Cortez* [also by Spontini], as well as other masterworks. But at least, as far as our concerts go, one would hope that the performance of some excerpts from these same highly anticipated works would be favorably received by the same amateur public who would like to see the works performed at the theater. Well! no, the public remains cold to these advances… [4]

It is easy to understand the "cold" reception that these excerpts received from those members of the audience who wished to see eighteenth-century opera returned to the theaters. Removed from their original setting, these isolated arias and choruses were severely limited in their ability to convey to modern Parisian audiences the dramatic possibilities of the complete works.

Many audience members evidently found these works appealing, since most of the major concert series of the *fin de siècle* continued to perform works by Gluck on a frequent basis—including (in addition to the Société des Concerts) the influential concert series led by Colonne, Lamoureux, and Pasdeloup.[5] Jann Pasler has pointed out, for example, that concerts featuring the Opéra soprano Gabrielle Krauss performing

[4] Edme-Marie-Ernest Deldevez, *La Société des Concerts, 1860 à 1885*, ed. Gérard Streletski (Heilbronn: Edition Lucie Galland, 1998), 22–23: "On regrette, ne cesse-t-on de répéter, que l'Opéra ne s'occupe pas de reprendre *Armide*, la *Vestale*, *Fernand Cortez*, ainsi que d'autres chefs-d'œuvre. Mais au moins, pour ce qui concerne nos concerts, on avait lieu d'espérer que l'exécution de quelques fragments de ces mêmes ouvrages tant attendus seraient accueillis [*sic*] favorablement par ce même public-amateur qui voudrait voir au théâtre la reprise de ces opéras. Eh bien ! non, le public reste froid à ces avances…"

**Table 3.1: Gluck at the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, 1875-1914**[6]

| Opera | Excerpt | Years |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| *Alceste* | Air ("Divinités du Styx") | 1875, 1887 |
| *Iphigénie en Aulide* | Fragments de Ballet (Prelude-Andantino-Gavotte) | 1875, 1877 (2x), 1882, 1883, 1885, 1890, 1897, 1899 |
| *Orphée* | Entrée d'Orphée aux Champs-Elysées | 1876, 1878, 1879, 1884, 1888 |
| *Iphigénie en Aulide* | Air de Danse | 1876 |
| *Armide* | Scène et Air | 1877 |
| *Orphée* | Air (probably "J'ai perdu mon Euridice") | 1877 |
| *Armide* | Choeur | 1878 |
| *Iphigénie en Aulide* | Overture | 1880, 1882, 1884, 1898 |
| *Orphée* | Recit, Air, Scène des Enfers | 1880 |
| *Orphée* | Fragment symphonique (probably Entrée aux Champs-Elysées) | 1882 |
| *Orphée* | Scène des Enfers | 1883 |
| *Armide* | Choeur ("Voici la charmante retraite") | 1884 |
| *Orphée* | Fragments (numerous) | 1892 |
| *Alceste* | Scenes from Act I | 1895 |
| *Orphée* | Act II | 1896 |
| *Armide* | Act III | 1901 |
| *Orphée* | Scène des Champs-Elysées | 1904 |
| *Alceste* | Fragments from Act I | 1908 |

"Divinités du Styx" form *Alceste* (along with works by other composers) brought in the most ticket sales of 1886 on the Concerts Colonne, prompting the popular excerpt of Gluck's opera to be repeated a number of times over the following seasons.[7] Furthermore, Gluck's works appeared occasionally at the salon of the Princesse de Polignac for about a decade beginning in 1896, as well as on programs of the Société des

[5] A useful table of the performances of Gluck's works (as well as those of other "early music" composers) on Parisian concert series may be found in Jann Pasler, "Deconstructing d'Indy, or the Problem of a Composer's Reputation," in *Writing Through Music: Essays on Music, Culture, and Politics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 135–36.

[6] The source for the information in this table is the online database of concerts maintained by D. Kern Holoman, available at http://hector.ucdavis.edu/sdc/. This website is the companion to Holoman's text *The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, 1828–1967* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), which remains largely silent on the prevalence of early music on the concert series during the time period of this study.

[7] Pasler, "Building a Public for Orchestral Music," 228.

Grandes Auditions Musicales de France (led by the Comtesse Greffulhe), including a production of *Iphigénie en Tauride* in 1893.[8]

Beginning around the turn of the century, another important source for the performance of Gluck's works was the Schola Cantorum, largely due to the influence of Vincent d'Indy. Though in its early years the Schola focused nearly exclusively on early sacred music, by the turn of the century its repertoire had extended to include a wide range of musical styles, although a general focus on music before 1800 continued.[9] Gluck was a pivotal figure in music history for d'Indy; the older composer's works were staples of the curriculum of the Schola and were regularly featured in its concerts. As with other concert series, Gluck's presence at the Schola began with shorter excerpts and enlarged to include entire acts—a progression that culminated in the production of the complete *Orphée* in 1910 and 1911. By this time, however, Gluck's works had been regularly revived at the Opéra and Opéra-Comique for over a decade. Before turning to these performances, we must first address efforts to promote Gluck on another front: the library.

[8] On music in the salon of the Princesse de Polignac, including a list of concerts, see Sylvia Kahan, *Music's Modern Muse: A Life of Winnaretta Singer, Princesse de Polignac* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003). An investigation of the Société des Grandes Auditions may be found in Jann Pasler, "Countess Greffulhe as Entrepreneur: Negotiating Class, Gender, and Nation," in *Writing Through Music* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 285–317.

[9] For a thorough examination of the Schola and its early-music practices, see Catrina Flint de Médicis, "The Schola Cantroum, Early Music and French Political Culture, from 1894–1914" (Ph.D. diss, McGill University, 2006). Another investigation of the Schola's place in *fin-de-siècle* musical culture is Gail Hilson Woldu, "Debussy, Fauré, and d'Indy and the Conceptions of the Artist: The Institutions, the Dialogues, the Conflicts," in *Debussy and His World*, ed. Jane Fulcher (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 235–53.

**Gluck in the Library: The Pelletan Edition**

In addition to Gluck's prominence in the concert hall, during the decades around the turn of the century his works also came into their own in Parisian libraries. In 1873, Fanny Pelletan began work on a Gluck complete edition—or rather, a complete edition of Gluck's *French* works—with the assistance of Berlioz's close friend Berthold Damcke, to be published by Richault. The vexing need for subscribers was avoided by the large amount of her personal fortune that Pelletan invested in acquiring sources and generally financing the publication. She was inspired to undertake this herculean task by Berlioz's admiration for Gluck, as well as his lamentations that no complete edition existed of the eighteenth-century master's works, found in *Les Grotesques de la musique* (1859):

> And as ill-fortune would have it, the old French edition, the only one in which the master's thoughts are to be found intact (I'm referring to the full scores), is becoming rarer by the day, and is very poor in respect of both layout and accuracy. It's marred by a lamentable lack of coherence and innumerable faults of every kind.
>
> In a few years' time two or three copies of these vast dramatic poems, these inimitable models of expressive music, will be all that remain in our great libraries, incomprehensible débris of another age…. No one in Europe has ventured to undertake a new edition of Gluck's six great operas which is at the same time scholarly, properly laid out and annotated, and well translated into both German and Italian. No serious attempt has been made to raise a subscription for this purpose. No one has considered risking 20,000 francs (it would cost no more than that) to combat in this way the ever more numerous agents of destruction which threaten these masterpieces. And despite the resources at the disposal of art and industry, this monstrous universal indifference to the key interests of musical art will cause these masterpieces to perish.[10]

Two years after the Gluck edition had begun, Damcke died and Pelletan approached Camille Saint-Saëns, known to be an admirer of Gluck's works, for a replacement. Saint-

[10] Hector Berlioz, *The Musical Madhouse (Les Grotesques de la musique)*, trans. and ed. Alastair Bruce (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 124.

Saëns accepted this position, and later took over management of the project when Pelletan herself died only a year later. This edition was finally completed in 1902. From its inception, the Pelletan edition was placed in competition with the German Bach and Handel complete editions of the late nineteenth century. A review of the first two volumes of the Gluck edition (the two *Iphigénie* operas) pointed out that:

> Bach, Handel, and Beethoven have theirs in the guise of magnificent editions published by the Leipzig *Bachgesellschaft*, by Chrysander, and by Breitkopf and Härtel. Here is Gluck in their company, receiving at last the homage he has been due for so long.[11]

Nearly a half century later in 1922, Saint-Saëns's early biographer Jean Bonnerot expressed a very similar sentiment a year after Saint-Saëns's death: "It had taken thirty years of work to bring this Gluck edition to fruition, one of the richest monuments that France has raised to music, worthy of the great edition of Bach and Handel that Germany has published."[12] Although keeping in mind Bonnerot's post-World War I perspective, it is nonetheless significant that he compares the French Gluck edition specifically to key editions of German composers. The word "monument," is further indication that this edition was seen as—and likely was intended to be—a nationalist statement; it was the academic equivalent of the statues of Jeanne d'Arc and other notable French figures that spread throughout the nation at the turn of the century. Just as these statues did for historical figures, this new edition created a physical representation of Gluck's musical

[11] *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 28 June 1874: "Bach, Handel, Beethoven ont le leur sous forme de splendides éditions, publiées par la *Bachgesellschaft* de Leipzig, par Chrysander, par Breitkopf et Härtel. Voici Gluck en leur compagnie, recevant enfin l'hommage qui lui était dû depuis longtemps…."

[12] Jean Bonnerot, *C. Saint-Saëns (1835–1921): sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris: Durand, 1922), 75: "Il avait suffit de trente années de labeur pour mener à bien cette édition de Gluck, un des plus riches monuments que la France ait élevés à la musique, digne pendant des grandes éditions de Bach et de Handel publiées en Allemagne."

greatness, allowing him to better serve as a symbol of France's musical past. Gluck's historical importance is underscored here also by the fact that Pelletan's Gluck edition was the first of its kind, with a similar Rameau edition not begun until 1895.[13]

Saint-Saëns himself underscored the nationalistic aspect of the Gluck edition—ironically, he did so by calling into question the quality of Damcke's editing. Saint-Saëns's *École buissonnière: notes et souvenirs* (1913) contains a chapter dealing with the *Orphée* edition, in which he complains bitterly about the many alterations and "improvements" that Damcke made in his Gluck editions.

> [Damcke] belonged to the tribe of German professors who have since become legion. Due to their baleful influence, in a short time, when the old editions have disappeared, the works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, even of Chopin, will be all but unrecognizable. The works of Sebastian Bach and Handel will be the only ones in existence in their pristine purity of form, thanks to the admirable editions of the *Bach und Händel Gesellschaft*.[14]

The subtext here seems to be that the German Damcke is incapable of editing Gluck's music well; the French alone (meaning Saint-Saëns and, to a lesser extent, Pelletan) possessed the necessary understanding of his operas. The composer also unequivocally derides Germany and its scholars for not similarly treating the music of the classical school with the same acumen as they had addressed (German) composers like Bach and Handel. Under his direction, Saint-Saëns suggests, the Gluck edition was proof positive that France was equal or superior to Germany in treating its composers with the reverence

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[13] Several of Lully's works did appear on the series *Les chefs d'oeuvres classiques de l'opéra français*, edited by T. de Lajarte (Paris, 1878–83). That edition, however, despite its similarly monumental focus, was not dedicated to a single composer and was less ambitious, containing only piano/ vocal scores.

[14] Camille Saint-Saëns, *Musical Memories*, trans. Edwin Gile Rich (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1919), 155–56.

that they deserved. Furthermore, the implied historical importance granted to a composer who merited such a luxurious edition, especially one under the auspices of such a notable musical figure as Saint-Saëns, seems to have had a galvanizing effect on Gluck's place in the opera house. It was only a small step from the monumentalizing effect of the Pelletan Gluck edition to the composer's inclusion in the burgeoning Operatic Museum.

However important the Pelletan edition was for national pride, it would seem that performers felt no compulsion to make use of it exclusively. With *Orphée* and *Alceste*, particularly, choosing performance materials was a problem, since Berlioz—another hero of French music history—had prepared a more modern adaptation of both works. The solution to this problem seems to have been a compromise, at least to some extent, with elements of the newer edition incorporated into the framework of Berlioz's adaptation. The choice to use Berlioz's edition as the basic material for the work is not surprising. The connection to a composer who, by 1896, was generally regarded as one of France's greatest musical figures could only help *Orphée*'s chances of success. Furthermore, it was almost certainly Berlioz's version that was heard so frequently in the concert hall excerpts, and the Opéra-Comique might not have been willing to take a chance on audiences being pleased to hear "new" versions of favorite arias and choruses.[15]

Other productions followed *Orphée*'s lead whenever possible, and Berlioz's modern versions were preferred throughout the turn of the century. But with the works Berlioz's had not adapted (*Armide* and the two *Iphigénie* operas), the most likely approach was to alter the Pelletan edition wherever necessary. Even with the elements of the Pelletan score that were used in the 1896 *Orphée*, some changes were made to create

[15] Although reviews do not specifically mention the use of the Berlioz adaptations in concert excerpts, the use of a period orchestra or any specific attempt at "authenticity" in the performances usually merited special attention.

a more "modern" sound, a task that fell to Julien Tiersot, as Hughes Imbert clarified in *Le Guide musical*:

> helping himself to the reconstructive work done with such attention and intelligence by Mlle Pelletan, with the purpose of removing editorial and copying mistakes, and also (it must be said) Gluck's oversights, M. Tiersot, the knowledgeable assistant librarian of the Conservatoire, has modified somewhat the orchestration, which still left something to be desired.[16]

Thus, though the sources (archival and critical) are often somewhat unclear about the specifics of what edition was used for performance, the general approach to Gluck's operas during the *fin de siècle* was to modernize the works somewhat, whether through adapting Berlioz's version or by other hands.

**Gluck at the Opera House**

Writing in 1895, Paul Dukas provides us with a glimpse of his thoughts on the Operatic Museum:

> Works signed by glorious names who, in their time, were the object of discussions that they surely would no longer raise today, are thus classified in advance as operas that would not bring in money, which is to say, works condemned to be forgotten; the Opéra, in effect, cannot voluntarily take unpredictable risks in its selections, its existence being dependent strictly on its commercial prosperity and its traditions having created exigencies of luxury that it cannot strip away, under pain of bankruptcy. And so we must renounce the hope of seeing the Opéra form a truly classic repertoire, composed of the most important works of the great masters, French and foreign. Furthermore, it is likely that the public's interest in such works would be platonic; we have clearly seen the

[16] *Le Guide musical,* 8 March 1896. "Puis, se servant du travail de reconstitution fait avec tant de soin et d'intelligence par Mlle Pelletan, dans le but d'enlever les fautes de rédaction, de copie et aussi (il faut bien le dire) les négligences de Gluck, M. Tiersot, le savant sous-bibliothécaire du Conservatoire, a quelque peu modifié l'orchestration, qui laissait encore à désirer."

> productions of *Don Juan* and *Der Freischütz*, which the Opéra has finally had to abandon.[17]

Dukas's observations seem to paint a gloomy picture for the possibility of the resurrection of any pre-modern works on the major operatic stages of Paris. On the subject of Gluck, however, he is more optimistic: "As concerns Gluck, he has come back into fashion for some time now, and, the wind blowing in his favor, it would not be surprising if the promise, given by three generations of directors, to return one of his works to the stage, will finally be realized."[18] What made Gluck's works so different? Why, in other words, were Gluck's works popular enough that the major theaters felt reasonably confident in their success, while other classics, including *Don Giovanni*, were doomed to fail? In order to answer these questions, we need to set the stage with an overview of the reception of Gluck's operas in Paris.

The Opéra-Comique's *Orphée* in 1896 was the first complete Gluck opera seen on a major Parisian stage since the 1860s. This production, which is the subject of this chapter's case study, proved to be the starting point for a major resurgence of interest Gluck's operas in France. Indeed, after that time Gluck's works appeared with surprising

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[17] *La Revue hebdomadaire*, July 1895, reprinted in Paul Dukas, *Les écrits de Paul Dukas sur la musique* (Paris: Société d'éditions françaises et internationales, 1948), 256–57: "Les œuvres signées de noms glorieux qui, dans leur temps, furent l'objet de discussions qu'elles ne soulèveraient plus à coup sûr aujourd'hui, sont de la sorte classées d'avance dans la catégorie des opéras qui ne peuvent faire recette, c'est-à-dire condamnées à l'oublie ; l'Opéra, en effet, ne peut rien tenter de volontairement aléatoire en ces matières, son existence dépendant étroitement de sa prospérité commerciale et ses traditions lui ayant créé des exigences de luxe auxquelles, sous peine de déchoir, il ne peut se dérober. Il faut donc renoncer à l'espoir de voir se former à l'Opéra un répertoire véritablement classique, comprenant les œuvres les plus importantes des grands maîtres français et étrangers. D'ailleurs, il est probable que l'intérêt porté par le public à ses œuvres serait platonique; on l'a bien vu lors des représentations de *Don Juan* et du *Freischütz*, auxquelles l'Opéra dut finalement renoncer."

[18] *La Revue hebdomadaire*, July 1895, reprinted in Dukas, *Les écrits de Paul Dukas*, 257: "En ce qui concerne Gluck, il est revenu à la mode depuis quelque temps, et, le vent soufflant de son côté, il ne serait pas étonnant que la promesse, formulée par trois générations de directeurs, de remettre à la scène un de ses ouvrages, fût enfin réalisée."

frequency on Parisian stages, and by 1907 each of the composer's French "masterpieces" had received at least one major revival (see Table 3.2). Gluck's works were so ubiquitous in *fin-de-siècle* Paris that a biographical article on the composer in the popular journal *Musica* in 1905 maintained that:

> Although generations pass, and with them faddish repertoires, *Alceste*, *Orphée*, *Armide*, and the two *Iphigénie*s feature today on the bill of nearly all of the opera theaters. If ever a past composer was continuously current, and deserved eternal tributes, it is this one.[19]

The irony of this passage, written by M.-D. Calvocoressi, is that Gluck's operas had indeed been forgotten (with the exceptions of the Berlioz/Viardot versions) for much of the nineteenth century. By the beginning of the twentieth, however, such a rejection of the composer had become unthinkable.

**Table 3.2: Major Revivals of Gluck's Operas in Paris, 1896–1918**

| Opera | Year | Theater |
|---|---|---|
| *Orphée et Eurydice* | 1896 | Opéra-Comique |
| *Iphigénie en Tauride* | 1900 | Opéra-Comique |
| *Alceste* | 1904 | Opéra-Comique |
| *Armide* | 1905 | Opéra |
| *Orphée* | 1905 | Opéra-Comique |
| *Iphigénie en Aulide* | 1907 | Opéra-Comique |
| *Orphée et Eurydice* | 1910/1911 | Schola Cantorum |
| *Orphée et Eurydice* | 1912 | Opéra-Comique |

The 1896 *Orphée* marked the beginning of a string of Gluck revivals at the Opéra-Comique. At first, new productions of Gluck's works appeared about once every four years: *Iphigénie en Tauride* was produced there in 1900, starring the soprano Rose Caron.

[19] *Musica*, November 1905: "Tandis que les générations passent, et avec elles les éphémères répertoires, *Alceste*, *Orphée*, *Armide*, les deux *Iphigénies* figurent encore aujourd'hui sur l'affiche de presque tous les théâtres lyriques. Si jamais compositeur défunt fut constamment d'actualité, et mérita d'éternels hommages, c'est bien celui-ci."

*Alceste* followed four years later, featuring Félia Litvinne in the title role. After this point, however, the pace of revivals began to quicken. In 1905—nearly a decade after the Opéra-Comique began to feature Gluck's works prominently—the Opéra finally took notice, mounting a production of *Armide.* This production marks that theater's sole contribution to the Gluck revival; the *Armide* production was continued there over a number of years, but the theater made no attempts to produce other Gluck works. Thus it was again at the Opéra-Comique that the collection of Gluck's "masterworks" was completed with *Iphigénie en Aulide*.

Gluck's works were staged occasionally in venues aside from the two major opera theaters, but never for very long. The Schola Cantorum, for example, produced *Orphée* in 1910 and again in 1911 (in single performances), with the title role sung by a tenor. Eugène Borrel, examining the Schola's performances of Gluck's works during the *fin de siècle*, was of the opinion that the Schola was restoring Gluck's original intentions for his opera:

> Gluck has been a preferred composer for the Schola: the *Iphigénie*s, *Alceste*, and *Armide* have been given [in concert performances] successively; but the most striking is the performance of *Orphée* with the principal role restored to a tenor; this performance was the prelude and the determining reason for the revival at the Opéra-Comique [in 1912]; until then, in effect, it was customary since Mme Viardot to replace the tenor with an alto, which disrupted all the expressive effect of the role, written for a man by Gluck. Here again we must count the actions of the Schola as a small aesthetic police action.[20]

[20] Eugène Borrel, "La Schola et la Restauration de la musique ancienne," in Vincent d'Indy, et al, *La Schola Cantorum en 1925* (Paris : Bloud et Gay, 1927), 136–37: "Gluck a été aussi un auteur de prédilection pour la Schola : les *Iphigénies*, *Alceste*, *Armide*, ont été données successivement ; mais l'exécution la plus marquante est celle d'*Orphée* avec le rôle principal restitué à une haute-contre (ténor) ; elle a été le prélude et la raison déterminante de la reprise à l'Opéra-Comique ; jusque-là en effet, on avait l'habitude, depuis Mme Viardot, de remplacer le ténor par un contralto, ce qui bouleversait tout l'effet expressif de ce rôle écrit pour un homme par Gluck. Ici encore il faut compter à l'actif de la Schola cette petite opération de police esthétique."

Despite occasional appearances elsewhere, however, Gluck essentially remained the property of the Opéra-Comique. In explaining the predominance of Gluck's works there, it is tempting to draw connections between the traditional repertoire of the theatre (i.e., the opéra comique as a genre)—usually characterized as "eminémment français"—and the equally French identity of Gluck.[21] This French character is entirely in keeping with the *fin-de-siècle* goals of the theater. In an 1898 issue of *Le Figaro* largely devoted to the topic of the role of the Opéra-Comique in French society, a number of composers wrote columns that called for the institution to demonstrate the glories of French music of the past (as well as the present) and to become, in this way, an overtly nationalistic entity.[22] The composer and critic Alfred Bruneau, for example, felt that the Opéra-Comique should be

> a French theater, entirely French. And by that I do not mean reserved for only our composers appropriate to be placed in the first rank, but guided by a spirit of large and proud French generosity, which is to say respectful to the same degree of our authentic past glories and of the indisputable universal glories; curator of the national genius so that we may transmit it to the true masters of today…[23]

[21] On the "eminémment français" quality of the opéra-comique (both the genre and the institution), see for example Lesley Wright, "Carvalho and the Opéra Comique: L'Art de se hâter lentement," in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009): 99–126. Wright demonstrates that the resurrection and maintenance of a repertoire of operas comiques was a central feature of Carvalho's plan to revitalize the Opéra-Comique around the turn of the century.

[22] These columns in *Le Figaro* are treated extensively in Philippe Blay, " 'Un théâtre français, tout à fait français,' ou un débat fin-de-siècle sur l'Opéra-Comique," *Revue de musicologie* 87 (2001) : 105–44.

[23] *Le Figaro*, 4 February 1898. Quoted in Blay "'Un théâtre français," 105. "Un théâtre français, tout à fait français. Et, par là, j'entends non pas réservé à nos seuls compositeurs, qu'il importe cependant de placer au premier rang, mais mené par un esprit de large et fière générosité française, c'est-à-dire respectueux au même degré de nos vielles gloires authentiques et des indiscutables gloires universelles ; conservateur du génie national tel que nous le transmettent nos vrais maîtres d'aujourd'hui…"

Given the prominence of the idea that a major role of the Opéra-Comique was the preservation of French operatic triumphs, echoed time and again at the turn of the century, it is hardly surprising that Gluck's works began to appear in earnest only a few years later.

Furthermore, although Gluck's operas do not conform to the traditional guidelines of the Opéra-Comique (which required spoken dialogue), it is worth noting that the nature of the genre was in flux during this time, as was its status as the "true national genre" of France. Saint-Saëns, for example, explicitly stated that:

> The true national genre, we have forgotten, is the great French opera created by Quinault…the *tragédie lyrique* whose most prominent quality was beauty of declamation, a tradition faithfully upheld until the Italian invasion of the beginning of this century. In returning to declaimed singing, to the *drame lyrique*, France has done nothing else but to retake what is rightfully hers, with a more modern appearance.[24]

Thus, far from being unpatriotic by focusing on the eighteenth-century *drames lyriques* of Gluck, the Opéra-Comique was in fact serving a nationalistic role by creating a place where this genre could be preserved for display.

**Critical Reception**

Critics were essentially unanimous in their approval of Gluck's operas on the Parisian stage. Nearly everyone shared the opinion that the revival of these works was appropriate, and not only as a one-off exercise in novelty programming. Critics

[24] *Le Temps*, 7 May 1898. Quoted in Blay, "'Un théâtre français," 124. "Le vrai genre national, on l'a oubliée, c'est le grand opéra français créé par Quinault…la tragédie lyrique dont la qualité première était la belle déclamation, tradition fidèlement gardée jusqu'à l'invasion italienne du commencement de ce siècle. En se retournant vers le chant déclamé, vers le drame lyrique, la France ne ferait donc autre chose que de reprendre son bien, sous des apparences plus moderne."

envisioned a future where modern music and "classical" music would exist side by side in dialogue, an attitude that demonstrated how thoroughly the idea of an Operatic Museum had taken hold by this time. In contrast to reviews of new operas, critics usually took the value of Gluck's works for granted. Thus, rather than discussing the unquestionable merits of the composer, reviewers tended to dwell on the quality of the production. If productions failed to please critics it was not perceived to be any failing of Gluck's, but rather of the interpretation. Dukas, for example, wrote in *La Revue hebdomadaire* in 1900 that he was repeatedly disappointed in the quality of productions of Gluck's works, which deserved much better in his opinion.[25] For Dukas, it would seem, there was no possibility that Gluck's operas were not of the highest quality; rather, any faults came as the result of poor interpretations.

Given this situation, the critical discussion turned inevitably to the proper way to perform Gluck's music for modern audiences, and so debates over the merits of individual productions became a major issue in the composer's reception. This question of performance practice came to a head in many ways in 1907, with the production of *Iphigénie en Aulide* at the Opéra-Comique. Vincent d'Indy was so incensed by that interpretation that he wrote a vitriolic letter to the editor of the journal *Comoedia* (later reprinted in *Le Guide Musical*). This letter—d'Indy biographer Léon Vallas describes it as "sévère à l'extrême" [26]— harshly criticized director Albert Carré, saying that nothing

> is on point in this interpretation: neither the recitatives, too solemn; nor the arias, totally lacking life and expression; nor the orchestra, perfect from

[25] *La Revue hebdomadaire*, August 1900. Reprinted in Dukas, *Les écrits de Paul Dukas*, 497–504.

[26] Léon Vallas, *Vincent d'Indy*, 2 vols. (Paris, Albin Michel, 1946/1950), 71.

> the point of view of the notes, absolutely off the mark from the point of view of the tone and style; nor even the ballet...[27]

Within weeks of the Opéra-Comique performance, d'Indy responded by conducting the overture to the opera at the Concerts Lamoureux (to which he had recently been appointed to the position of deputy to Chevillard). Such a course of action was dangerous for an opera composer, and, indeed, it set in motion d'Indy's estrangement from the institution.[28] These events caused quite a stir in the music periodicals in 1907 and 1908, highlighting the issues surrounding the importance of Gluck's historical placement at the *fin de siècle*.[29] Such notable figures as Gabriel Fauré and Camille Saint-Saëns joined in the fray, taking varying positions on the proper interpretation of Gluck's works. With Gluck's works part of the pinnacle of operatic composition, the partisan debates for and against the production of *Iphigénie* at the Opéra-Comique found any possible fault almost always with the interpretation rather than with the quality or style of the work itself, the quality of which, typically for Gluck reception, appeared beyond question. The notion that Gluck's operas were not only high-quality music but were also dramatically viable in the modern opera house is a striking contrast with perceptions about nearly every other "classical" French composer.

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[27] *Le Guide Musical*, 5 January 1908: "rien n'est au point dans cette interpretation: ni les récits, trop solennels; ne les airs, manquant totalement de vie et d'expression; ne l'orchestre, parfait au point de vue de la note, absolument à côté au point de vue de l'accent et du style ; ni même le ballet... D'Indy also referred to the performance in a letter as the "*massacre d'Iphigénie* au profit d'une affaire accessoire dans laquelle l'outrecuidance ne le cède qu'à la mauvaise foi." Letter to Octave Maus, 3 January 1908. Printed in Vincent d'Indy, *Ma Vie: Journal de Jeunesse, Correspondance Familiale et Intime, 1851–1931*, ed. Marie d'Indy (Paris: Séguier, 2001), 693.

[28] Andrew Thomson, *Vincent d'Indy and his World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 162.

[29] For a more in-depth examination of this particular instance, see William Gibbons, "*Iphigénie à Paris*: Positioning Gluck Historically in Early Twentieth-Century France." *Intersections: Canadian Journal of Music* 27 (2006): 3–15.

The critic Victor Debay, writing in *Le Courrier musical*, is an exception in that he places blame on Gluck's music as well as on its interpreters. The trepidation with which he criticized the construction of *Iphigénie en Aulide* is revealing:

> Despite our admiration for the works of Gluck…it is our duty, through concern for the truth and above all due to our scruples, to confess here the impression of cold indifference, we will not be bold enough to say boredom, that we have taken away from the revival of this opera, which has not been in Paris since 1824. For this we will blame both the dramatic conception of the work and its modern interpretation.[30]

Here Debay makes sure to reveal the high esteem in which he holds Gluck's operas before reluctantly suggesting that *Iphigénie en Aulide* might be in some ways a flawed work. Only rarely did critics condemn Gluck's works outright. Jean Marnold scathingly reviewed *Iphigénie en Aulide* in *Le Mercure de France* in 1908: "One perceives, in hearing it, a heap of confusingly heterogeneous impressions of which the worst is the total impossibility of taking seriously for a moment the action that one sees unfold onstage."[31] Significantly, Marnold goes on to reveal that the opera's ultimate fault lay in not conforming to the standards of post-Wagnerian music drama in the manner that he perceived *Orphée* to do.[32] The fact that he, or any critic, would expect Gluck's works to reflect modern tastes is a testament to the widespread perception of Gluck as a "current"

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[30] *Le Courrier musical*, 1 January 1908: "Malgré notre admiration pour l'oeuvre de Gluck…ce nous est un devoir, par souci de la vérité et par scrupule surtout, de confesser ici l'impression de froideur, nous n'oserons pas dire d'ennui, que nous avons rapportée de la reprise de cet opéra qui n'avait pas été à Paris depuis 1824. Nous en accuserons à la fois la conception dramatique de l'œuvre et sa moderne interprétation."

[31] *Le Mercure de France*, 16 January 1908. "On éprouve, à l'entendre, un amas d'impressions confusément hétérogènes dont la pire est une impossibilité parfaite de prendre un instant au sérieux l'action qu'on voit se dérouler sur les planches."

[32] *Orphée*'s particular resonance with post-Wagnerian aesthetic ideals is treated in depth below, in the case study for this chapter.

composer. Marnold's complaints also hint at the connection between Gluck and Wagner (as we will see later).

The broader reasons for the resurgence of interest in producing Gluck's works on the main operatic stages of Paris are complex, and resist any attempts at a simple cause-and-effect narrative. Several factors, however, undoubtedly contributed to the composer's *fin-de-siècle* success. First, by establishing Gluck as a quintessentially French composer (at least stylistically), it was possible for critics and audiences to view the composer as the musical equivalent of golden-age playwrights such as Corneille and Racine, allowing the composer to serve as a *lieu de mémoire*—essentially as a national treasure—extolling the glories of eighteenth-century France. Second, Gluck's continuing association with Wagner was exploited by both Wagnerians and anti-Wagnerians alike around the turn of the century, with the former tracing a history of music that led from Gluck directly to Bayreuth and others setting the two figures in opposition. Finally, the subject material of Gluck's operas allowed Parisian audiences and critics to indulge in the French cultural obsession for all things Greek, a preoccupation with a number of political ramifications.

**Gluck's French Identity: "Notre Corneille lyrique"**

A crucial part of maintaining Gluck as a major figure in French music history was establishing the composer himself as being definitively French. In the introduction to his 1882 book on Gluck (drawn from *Ménestrel* articles), H. Barbedette asks:

> Can one not say also that in matters of art, nationality does not depend on an act of birth?—Gluck is and will remain the founder of the French *drame lyrique*; with this title, he is French in the same way as Meyerbeer,

> and France should have the right to lay claim to him. Germans, when they act in good faith, recognize this themselves.[33]

This attitude toward the composer is typical. While acknowledging Gluck's Germanic roots, critics nonetheless regarded him as French by naturalization, much like Lully before him, or, as Barbedette points out, Meyerbeer later. Félix Clément, in his *Histoire de la musique* (1885), argued at least for the inherent Frenchness of Gluck's ideas, if not the composer himself:

> Gluck's theory, as excellent as it was, opposed only the tendencies of the Italian dramatic art…. The ideas published by the famous Bohemian composer in his letters and developed by his partisans were in essence French, and had been put into practice by Lully, by Campra, and even by Rameau, especially in *Castor et Pollux*.[34]

As Clément's position demonstrates, Gluck's French identity was preserved musically through positioning the composer in a direct historical line through Lully and, particularly, Rameau. Clément even goes so far as to identify Gluck as a "Bohemian," rather than "German" composer, thus rendering him less culturally dangerous. Furthermore, critics continually placed Gluck into the context of eighteenth-century France through comparisons with such literary giants as the encyclopedists.

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[33] H. Barbedette, *Gluck, sa vie, son système et ses oeuvres* (Paris: Heugel, 1882), iii, footnote 1. "Ne peut-on dire aussi qu'en matière d'art, la nationalité ne dépend pas d'un acte de naissance ?—Gluck est et restera le fondateur du drame lyrique français ; à ce titre, il est Français comme Meyerbeer et la France aurait le droit de le revendiquer. Les Allemands, lorsqu'ils sont de bonne foi, la reconnaissent eux-mêmes."

[34] Félix Clément, *Histoire de la musique, depuis les temps anciens jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1885), 529. "La théorie de Glück, tout excellente qu'elle fut, combattait exclusivement les tendances et les écarts de l'art dramatique italien…. Les idées publiées par le célèbre compositeur bohême dans ses lettres et développées par ses partisans étaient essentiellement françaises et avaient été mise en pratique par Lulli, par Campra et même par Rameau, surtout dans *Castor et Pollux*."

One of the key figures in this effort at the turn of the century was Romain Rolland, who in his *Musiciens d'autrefois* (1908) spent a great deal of time connecting Gluck to the traditions of the Encyclopedists. "Gluck's revolution," Rolland points out quite early in his discussion of the composer, "was not the work of Gluck's genius alone, but of an entire century of thought as well. It had been prepared, announced, and awaited by the Encyclopedists for twenty years."[35] In this view, Gluck serves a near-messianic role, fulfilling the operatic prophesies of the eighteenth century.

Rolland offers *Iphigénie en Aulide* as the perfect opera for encouraging such an interpretation, and in particular Gluck's choices of the topic and libretto. Though written by Du Roullet (much to the dismay of some later critics), the libretto was based on Racine's *Iphigénie en Aulide*, facilitating a connection to the golden age of French theater. Rolland, for example, positioned Gluck in the context of eighteenth-century French thought by citing Diderot's *Troisième entretien sur le fils naturel* (1757), which uses Racine's text as its example of a play that could be set fruitfully by a reformer of opera due to its expressivity and lyric qualities.[36] Furthermore, he asserts that the composer was probably familiar with Francesco Algarotti's 1755 *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica* (published in the May 1757 *Mercure de France* as *Essai sur l'opéra*), which

[35] Romain Rolland, *Musiciens d'autrefois* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1908), 207. "La révolution de Gluck…ne fut pas l'œuvre du seul génie de Gluck, mais de tout un siècle de pensée. Elle était préparée, annoncée, attendue depuis vingt ans par les Encyclopédistes."

[36] In response to one of Clytemnestra's passages, for example, Diderot writes that: "I do not know, either in Quinault or in any other poet, more lyrical verses, nor a situation more appropriate for musical imitation." ["Je ne connais, ni dans Quinault, ni dans aucune poète, des vers plus lyriques, ni de situation plus propre à l'imitation musicale."] He goes on to rhapsodize about the suitability of Racine's play for operatic setting for several pages.

included a libretto based on both Euripides and Racine as an example of future operatic reforms.[37]

While Rolland's criticism tied Gluck to eighteenth-century French thought, one would expect that associating him with the Encyclopedist tradition would also distance the composer from Rameau and the *tragédie lyrique*. However, the critic was able to associate Gluck with both Rameau and Rousseau by minimizing the significance of the infamous *Querelle des Bouffons*: "If….the Encyclopedists did not delay in vehemently taking Rousseau's side for Italian opera [against Rameau], it is because they were exasperated by the scandalous brutality with which the partisans of French opera opposed them."[38] This conjecture neatly sidesteps the necessity of allying Gluck (through the encyclopedists) with either side of this conflict, and allows the composer to be depicted as both faithfully following in Rameau's footsteps and eagerly responding to Rousseau's call for operatic reform.

This association with Rameau was emphasized in much of the critical discourse surrounding the Gluck at the turn of the century. For example, Gabriel Fauré wrote in response to the 1907 production of *Iphigénie en Aulide* at the Opéra that "Lully and Rameau had marked the route; Gluck, with his ardent, passionate, and profoundly human genius, was to widen it."[39] Similarly, in his review of the same production music historian Henri Quittard stated that by the 1774 première of *Iphigénie* the "art of Lully, of

[37] Rolland, *Musiciens d'autrefois*, 225.

[38] Rolland, *Musiciens d'autrefois*, 213, footnote 2. "Si…les Encyclopédistes ne tardèrent pas à prendre violemment parti pour Rousseau et pour l'opéra italien, c'est qu'ils furent exaspérés par la brutalité scandaleuse avec laquelle les partisans de l'opéra français les combattirent."

[39] *Le Figaro*, 19 December 1907. "Lulli et Rameau avaient tracé la route; Gluck, avec son génie ardent, passionné, profondément humain, devait l'élargir."

Campra, of Rameau is already the art of Gluck… *Iphigénie en Aulide* is the first homage of the genius of Gluck to the genius of the French masters, in whom he recognized his true precursors and whom he overshadowed in realizing more completely what they had conceived."[40] He goes on to name *Iphigénie* as "the masterpiece of *ancien* French opera," a grand claim that certainly seems to position it and its composer looking backwards as opposed to towards the future.[41] As early as 1877, Henri Lavoix could maintain that Gluck's operas "mark the point of culmination of the old *drame lyrique*, which began in France with Lully and arrived at its apogee with Gluck."[42] This approach—positioning Gluck as the logical outcome of the musical developments of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France—serves to minimize Italian and Austro-German contributions to eighteenth-century opera, helping to reinforce the image of Gluck as French as opposed to German. It also enhances France's role in the development of opera after Gluck, since any composer influenced by him would have been emulating an essentially French style.

Once Gluck was clearly identified as French, he could be placed in the pantheon of great French artists. Indeed, Gluck's position as the musical equivalent of Racine or

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[40] *La Revue musicale*, 1 January 1908. "L'art de Lulli, de Campra, de Rameau, c'est déjà l'art de Gluck… *Iphigénie en Aulide* est le premier hommage du génie de Gluck au génie des maîtres français, en que il reconnaissait ses véritables précurseurs et qu'il allait faire oublier en réalisant plus complètement ce qu'ils avaient conçu."

[41] "le chef-d'oeuvre de l'ancien opéra français." This positioning of Gluck is not surprising given Quittard's primary focus on music of the seventeenth century. Connecting Gluck with the French musical past, then, would require connecting him with those traditions. As Catrina Flint de Médicis has pointed out, all "early music" was not created equal in *fin-de-siècle* Paris. There was a significant distinction between the treatments of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music in French scholarship (and performance) of this time, with one often being privileged over the other depending on the historical and political value systems of the author (or performer). For more, see de Médicis, "The Schola Cantorum," especially 26–27.

[42] Henri Lavoix, *Histoire de la musique* (Paris: Quantin, 1877), 232. "[les opéras de Gluck] marquent le point culminant de l'ancien drame lyrique, qui commence en France avec Lulli pour arriver à son apogée avec Glück."

Corneille was well established by 1900. Gustave Chouquet, in his *Histoire de la musique dramatique en France* (1873), contends that "like Pierre Corneille," Gluck

> endowed our stage with sublime tragedies….Between these two masculine geniuses, more reflective than spontaneous, we find this point of resemblance: their tragedies have in common a type of grandeur, but they differ from one another in appearance—by their forms and characters. Finally, their theater does not soften the heart, but entirely to the contrary, it elevates and fortifies it.[43]

The gender tropes are too evident to ignore in this passage. Choquet explicitly refers to Gluck and Corneille as "masculine geniuses," and reinforces this with stereotypically male characteristics: they are "reflective" not "spontaneous," they have "grandeur," and their dramas are aimed at "elevating" and "fortifying" the audience rather than "softening" them.[44] Katharine Ellis has pointed out the feminization of Racine during the *fin-de-siècle*, which suggests that perhaps here Gluck was being connected with Corneille in order to preserve the composer's masculinity.[45]

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[43] Gustave Chouquet, *Histoire de la musique dramatique en France, depuis ses origines jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Librairie Didot, 1873), 163. "Comme Pierre Corneille, il [Gluck] a doté notre scène de tragédies sublimes…. Entre ces deux mâles génies, plus réfléchis que spontanés, nous trouvons encore ce point de ressemblance : leurs tragédies ont toutes un type de grandeur commun, mais elles diffèrent les unes des autres par la physionomie, par les formes et par les caractères. Leur théâtre enfin n'amollit pas ; tout au contraire, il élève, il fortifie les cœurs."

[44] For an analysis of attempts to masculinize French music history during the *fin de siècle*, see Annegret Fauser, "Gendering the Nations: The Ideologies of French Discourse on Music (1870–1914)," in *Musical Constructions of Nationalism: Essays on the History and Ideology of European Musical Culture, 1800-1945*, ed. Michael Murphy and Harry White (Cork: Cork University Press, 2001), 72–103.

[45] On the musical ramifications of Racine's turn-of-the-century feminization, see Katharine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past: Early Music in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 145–46.

Many critics, while linking Gluck to classical theater, were less focused on Corneille in particular, allowing also a connection to Racine.[46] In his own *Histoire de la musique*, Lavoix opines that "Gluck is the most faithful musical translator of the great *tragédie* of Racine and Corneille."[47] Julien Tiersot, on his part, referred in 1907 to Gluck's operas as the "musical equivalent" of the tragedies of Corneille and Racine.[48] In fact, numerous reviews of Gluck's works as early as the 1860s, particularly the full operatic productions, constantly reinforced the image of the composer as a part of Paris's intellectual and artistic history, placing him squarely as a part of specifically French heritage—a comparison that lasted well into the twentieth century.

Comparing Gluck to Corneille, in particular, was high praise indeed; classical French theater was in the midst of a major revival around the turn of the century. Corneille was the subject of a number of studies during this time, and, with the exception of a brief decline in popularity in the immediate aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, his tragedies were never far from Parisian stages.[49] Victor Cousin wrote in the influential *Du vrai, du beau, et du bien* (1853) that "Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides together do not at all balance Corneille alone…Corneille is the creator of a *pathétique nouveau*,

[46] M.-D. Calvocoressi even compared Gluck directly to Racine rather than Corneille in his article on the composer in the November 1905 issue of *Musica*, though this comparison is superficial rather than substantive (in the same passage, at the head of the article, Calvocoressi compares Gluck to Michelangelo).

[47] Lavoix, *Histoire de la musique*, 234. "Glück est le plus fidèle traducteur musical de la grand tragédie de Racine et de Corneille."

[48] *Le Ménestrel*, 6 April 1907.

[49] For a discussion of Corneille's prominence at the *fin-de-siècle*, see Roger Le Brun, *Corneille devant trois siècles* (Paris: Sansot, 1906), lxxi–lxxxvii.

unknown in antiquity and to all the moderns before him."[50] Similarly, Victor de Laprade opined in 1882 that "if France were forced in some shipwreck to sacrifice all its poets except for one, the one that she would have to save is Corneille."[51] In his popular text on Corneille's life and works (originally published in 1898), Gustave Lanson succinctly summarizes the playwright's importance to the *fin-de-siècle*: "Before [Corneille], the *tragédie classique* did not exist. Through him, it existed."[52]

Given the status of Corneille and French classical theater during this time, music was very much in need of a "Corneille lyrique" to demonstrate the greatness of the history of French music just as Corneille proved the glory of French theater—a role Gluck was uniquely capable of playing. Mozart could not have served, despite his popularity until around 1900, for several reasons. First, as I have pointed out in Chapter 2, he was (almost) irredeemably Germanic, and so despite the best efforts of some critics, Mozart could not be adopted by the French in the same manner as Gluck. Furthermore, Mozart's operas did not fit into the mold of the *tragédie* that so typified classical French opera and theater.[53] Even the ever-popular *Don Giovanni* was tragicomic, not set in

[50] This passage is reprinted in Le Brun, *Corneille devant trois siècles*, 91. "Eschyle, Sophocle, et Euripide ensemble ne balancent point le seul Corneille…Corneille est le créateur d'un pathétique nouveau, inconnu à l'antiquité et à tous les modernes avant lui…"

[51] This passage from *Essais de critique idéaliste* is reprinted in Le Brun, *Corneille devant trois siècles*, 92. "Si la France était forcée, dans quelque naufrage, à sacrificer tous ses poètes hormis un seul, celui qu'elle devrait sauver, c'est Corneille."

[52] Gustave Lanson, *Corneille*, 3rd Ed. (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1909), 187. "Avant [Corneille], la tragédie classique n'existait pas. Par lui elle a existé."

[53] The performance of sections of *Idomeneo* at the Schola Cantorum in 1902 and 1903 might have been aimed at demonstrating Mozart's more tragic side. These performances, however, failed to draw much attention to the opera, which remained fairly unknown to *fin de siècle* Parisian audiences.

antiquity (as good tragedy nearly always was), and featured a protagonist who was anything but heroic.[54]

Rameau should have been a more likely contender for the title of "Corneille lyrique"—perhaps, at least superficially, more likely than Gluck himself. Rameau was French by birth (rather than by national "adoption," as was Gluck), and his works were clearly written as *tragédies lyriques*. The main complaint against Rameau, as I will investigate more fully in Chapter 4, was that his works were not able to be readily understood by modern audiences, which is a charitable way of saying that audiences were not likely to pay to see them. If seventeenth-century theatrical works like Corneille's remained capable of being understood by modern audiences and even retained some measure of popularity, it would reflect poorly on the history of French music if the "Corneille lyrique" could not claim the same distinction. Gluck's operas, by contrast with Rameau's, were more dramatically viable, and, as we have seen above, were consistently approved of by *fin-de-siècle* critics. As one critic pointed out as late as 1914, "Rameau is no more than the pleasant reflection of an epoch—one must listen to him with the ears of a historian; Gluck is eternal."[55]

There are several reasons for Gluck's sustained dramatic viability. One straightforward reason lay in the proximity of Gluck's style to the later classical period; his musical style is much closer to Mozart, say, than to Rameau. Similarly, Gluck's operas did not demand the non-traditional (by nineteenth-century standards) orchestration that Rameau's work would—harpsichord continuo, for example. Furthermore, at least

[54] See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the issues surrounding performing Mozart's operas at the turn of the century.

[55] *Musica*, June 1914. "Rameau n'est plus que le reflet aimable d'une époque ; il le faut ouïr avec des oreilles d'historien ; Gluck est éternel."

*Orphée* and *Alceste* existed in orchestrations reworked for the modern symphony orchestra by Berlioz. Thus, Gluck's operas could be performed by the usual forces of the Opéra and Opéra-Comique, and with the usual singers. Another, more complex, reason for Gluck's continued viability lay in his continued association with Wagner, whose star was rapidly rising in *fin-de-siècle* Paris.

**Gluck and Wagner**

Critics began to associate Wagner with Gluck as early as the 1850s. It was the year 1861, however, that saw the nature of this connection become the object of a large-scale debate. Only a few months after Wagner's *Tannhäuser* failed so spectacularly at the Opéra, the same theater mounted a production of *Alceste*.[56] The similarities between the two works were too much for critics to miss, particularly in terms of comparing Wagner's music-theoretical innovations with Gluck's much-lauded preface to *Alceste*. The critic Paul Smith succinctly summarized the situation in a review of the 1866 *Alceste*:

> The last revival of *Alceste*, still quite recent, took place on 21 October 1861, the memorable year that began with the resounding downfall of *Tannhäuser*. The music of the future and that of the past confronted one another as if in a dueling arena, and the past readily triumphed over the future, which it well and truly buried.[57]

[56] For an examination of the 1861 productions of *Tannhäuser* and *Alceste* see William Gibbons, ""Music of the Past, Music of the Future: *Tannhäuser* and *Alceste* at the Paris Opéra," *19th-Century Music* 33/3 (Spring 2010, forthcoming).

[57] *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 14 October 1866. "La dernière reprise d'*Alceste*, encore toute récente, eut lieu le 21 octobre 1861, année mémorable qui avait commencé par la chute éclatante de *Tannhäuser*. La musique de l'avenir et celle du passé s'y mesurèrent comme en champs clos, et le passé eut facilement raison de l'avenir, qu'il enterra bel et bien."

In the 1860s and beyond, Wagner and Gluck had become irrevocably linked in the minds of French critics as well as, presumably, the opera-going public. The primary reason initially for connecting Gluck and Wagner had been to demonstrate that the latter composer's controversial musical "system"—as it was called in the press—was highly derivative of the well-known ideas that Gluck had set forth in his preface to *Alceste*, in which he rejected the excesses of Italian *opera seria* and set forth his principles of reform nearly a century before Wagner. As early as 1852, Paul Scudo contended that "M. Wagner believes himself the inventor of a system that is as old as opera itself."[58] Later critics took this position as well. Ange-Henri Blaze (*dit* Henri Blaze de Bury), for example, wrote in a review of *Alceste* at the Opéra in 1866 that

> I imagine that one would not surprise the author of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* too much by telling him that he had invented nothing, and that all this theory that he lays out with such great uproar in his volumes was explained by Gluck in a few prefatory pages written in that simple and clear style that honest men use; but does Mr. Richard Wagner suspect that this method, which he has not invented, comes to him from France, and that it is French wine from our region that he drinks in his German glass? Silliness and contradiction, here is a man who, in order to reform the national art of a country that yesterday gave to the world Beethoven and Weber, addresses himself to the most obsolete traditions of the old *tragédie française*! This man, having nothing in view except the future, looks only to the past….[59]

[58] *Revue des deux mondes*, 15 August 1852. "M. Wagner se croit l'inventeur d'un système qui est aussi vieux que la musique même…."

[59] *Revue des deux mondes*, 1 November 1866. "On n'étonnerait point beaucoup, j'imagine, l'auteur de *Tannhäuser* et de *Lohengrin* en lui disant qu'il n'a rien inventé et que toute cette théorie, qu'il étale à si grands fracas dans ses volumes, se trouve exposée par Gluck en quelques pages de préface écrites de ce style simple et clair que pratiquent les honnêtes gens ; mais M. Richard Wagner se doute-t-il que cette méthode, qu'il na pas inventée, lui vient en France, et que c'est du vin de notre cru qu'il boit dans son verre allemand ? Inconséquence et contradiction, voilà un homme qui, pour réformer l'art national d'un pays qui donnait hier au monde Beethoven et Weber, s'adresse aux plus caduques traditions de la vielle tragédie française ! Cette homme, n'ayant en vue que l'avenir, ne regarde que le passé…."

According to Blaze, Wagner's musical contributions were nothing more than an overblown paraphrase of Gluck's compositional tenets. More insidiously, Blaze finds that Wagner co-opts as German elements of Gluck's essentially French style. Barbedette, though less explicitly anti-Wagner, similarly compared the composer to Gluck, giving Gluck credit for most of Wagner's "developments," including the leitmotif:

> Like Gluck, Wagner gives the librettist the larger role [in the collaboration with the composer] (he is his own librettist, so his self-esteem need not suffer). Like Gluck, he wishes for the musical language to truly and exactly reflect the states of the soul; like him he exalts the power of the orchestra; like him, he likes to precede the entrance of a character with a symbolic phrase that characterizes and announces it.[60]

By the end of the century, however, the tables had turned. Although Gluck remained tied to Wagner, the connection served more and more to create a music-historical narrative that led directly from Gluck to Wagner, thus imbuing the author of *Tannhäuser* with an impeccably French artistic heritage. Chief among those for whom Gluck served this critical role was Vincent d'Indy, who, in his capacity as director of the influential Schola Cantorum, wielded an enormous amount of power in shaping public perceptions of music history, and, specifically, of Gluck. As Katharine Ellis has demonstrated, for d'Indy and his group the worth of "early" composers lay in "the proximity of their musical styles to that of the master of Bayreuth."[61] In order for

[60] Barbedette, *Gluck*, 89. "Comme Gluck, Wagner donne au poète la plus large part (il est poète lui-même, son amour-propre ne saurait en souffrir). Comme Gluck, il veut que le langage musical se fasse l'interprète fidèle et exact de tous les états de l'âme; comme lui il exalte la puissance de l'orchestre; comme lui, il aime à faire précéder l'entrée du personnage d'une sorte de phrase symbolique qui le caractérise et l'annonce."

[61] Katharine Ellis, "En Route to Wagner: Explaining d'Indy's Early Music Pantheon," in *Vincent d'Indy et son Temps*, ed. Manuela Schwartz (Sprimont, Belgium: Mardaga, 2006), 112. Ellis is here specifically referring to the value given to composers in d'Indy's *Cours de composition musicale*.

d'Indy's teleological view of music history to work, Gluck had to point forward all the way to Wagner and beyond. D'Indy's conception of the history of opera involved the migration of eighteenth-century French styles, formulated by Rameau and perfected by Gluck, to Germany, where they were further refined by Weber and ultimately Wagner. From that point onward true operatic greatness returned to France, where Wagnerians—implicitly d'Indy himself—took up the banner of Wagner's dramatic genius.

D'Indy, of course, was not the only critic to place Gluck in line with Wagner, just the most prominent. The musicologist Julien Tiersot, in his 1910 biography of Gluck, seized upon the preface to *Alceste* as a means of connecting the two composers just as numerous other critics had done before him, describing the document as a "déclaration des droits" for operatic composers.[62] This time, however, the focus shifts away from demonstrating Wagner's reforms to be derivative. In response to the perennial issue of the relationship between the music and the poetry, Tiersot quotes Wagner directly and then embarks on an excursus defending him from detractors.[63] It is worth noting that Tiersot, while connecting him to Wagner, also points out that Gluck "never had the thought of breaking the molds used by Lully and Rameau, but on the contrary…his highest ambition was to continue their traditions."[64] Thus Tiersot places Gluck in a historical narrative that begins with the origins of French opera in the *tragédie lyrique* and continues inexorably to the nineteenth-century music drama. In her review of the performance of the overture to *Iphigénie en Aulide* conducted by d'Indy in early 1908,

[62] Julien Tiersot, *Gluck*, 4th Edition (Paris: Alcan, 1919), 231.

[63] Tiersot, *Gluck*, 235–37.

[64] Tiersot, Gluck, 234. "[Gluck] n'a jamais eu la pensée de briser les formes utilisées par Lulli et Rameau, mais, au contraire…sa plus haute ambition fut de continuer leurs traditions."

Michel Brenet (pseudonym of Marie Bobilier) also found in Gluck a forerunner to Wagner's dramatic capabilities: "Under the direction of a fiery baton, the overture to *Iphigénie en Aulide* ceased to appear to us as a majestic portico peopled with hieratic mannequins, and became, as Wagner has forseen, the living synthesis of all the passions, all the sadness, all the conflicts of Greek drama…"[65]

Other critics agreed that there was a historical progression from Gluck to Wagner, but were less than pleased at the musical outcome of such progress. Chief among these was Claude Debussy, who saw Gluck as "a disaster for French music" for the same reasons that the Wagnerian Tiersot celebrated the composer.[66] From his vantage point of the post-war 1920s, Léon Vallas astutely pointed out that "Debussy systematically opposed to Rameau, the true Frenchman, the German musician, Gluck, who usurped his colleague's place. According to him, Gluck was the hereditary enemy who broke through our [French] national tradition and destroyed our music."[67] Debussy had earlier explicated Gluck's crimes in a sarcastic open letter addressed to Gluck directly:

> It is thanks to your influence that French music enjoyed the undesired advantage of falling into the arms of Wagner. I am convinced that without you, not only would this not have happened, but French musical art would not have inquired the way so often of persons who were only too anxious to lead her astray.[68]

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[65] *Le Guide musical*, 26 January 1908. "Au signe d'une baguette de feu, l'ouverture d'*Iphigénie en Aulide*, cessant de nous apparaître comme un majestueux portique, peuplé de mannequins hiératisés, est devenue, comme le devinait Wagner, la synthèse vivante de toutes les passions, de toutes les douleurs, de tous les conflits du drame grec…"

[66] Roger Nichols, *The Life of Debussy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 109.

[67] Léon Vallas, *The Theories of Claude Debussy, Musicien Français*, trans. Marie O'Brien (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), 69.

[68] *Gil blas*, 23 February 1903. This letter was eventually published in *Monsieur Croche, antidilettante*. This translation is taken from Vallas, *The Theories of Claude Debussy*, 74.

For Debussy, Gluck was positioned as an anti-Rameau, and so as such served a useful purpose. The idea that Gluck derailed the natural progress of French music could effectively explain the reason for Rameau's decline in popularity during the nineteenth century, removing any possibility that the latter's music might be in any way deficient.[69] However sharply Tiersot and Debussy may have diverged in their opinions of Wagnerian influence on French music, their opinions regarding Gluck's historical placement are not so dissimilar. Both figures saw the composer of *Alceste* as guiding French music down a path that would culminate in *Tristan*, whether for good or ill.

Jean d'Udine, however, in his influential 1906 biography of Gluck, saw the relationship between the two composers in a different light. While Tiersot and Debussy found in Gluck a forerunner to Wagner, d'Udine joined with those who saw the later composer as derivative. Gluck, he says, "imagined, well before Wagner, the 'unending melody,' with the advantage over the author of *Tristan* and the *Ring* that he did not fear to depart from either in the sense of the recitative or in that of the aria."[70] Even more damningly, d'Udine states explicitly that

> the colossus of Bayreuth, who believed himself to be a good Gluckist, was not… The Wagnerian 'unending melody' is a sophism; sophism defended genially by an incomparable orchestra, but sophism all the same…the disciples of Wagner, for example Humperdinck, Vincent d'Indy, and Alfred Bruneau, for example, are outside of the Gluckist tradition each time that they remain slaves to the aesthetic of the leitmotif and that they systematically avoid the straightforward forms, the true lyric forms.[71]

[69] This rationalization is explored in more detail in Chapter 4.

[70] Jean d'Udine, *Gluck* (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1906), 63. "il imagina, bien avant Wagner, la *mélodie continue*, avec cet avantage sur l'auteur de *Tristan* et de la *Tétralogie*, qu'il ne craignait de s'en écarter ni dans le sens du récitatif, ni dans celui de l'air."

[71] D'Udine,*Gluck*, 121. "le colosse de Bayreuth, qui se croyait un bon gluckiste, ne l'était point… La 'mélodie continue' wagnérienne est un sophisme ; sophisme défendu génialement par un orchestre

Given the lasting connection between Gluck and Wagner in the French press, it is hardly surprising that one can find a correlation between productions of the two composers' works in *fin-de-siècle* Paris. After the *Tannhäuser* debacle of 1861, Wagner's works only gradually began to return to the Parisian spotlight. Like Gluck, Wagner's music first appeared (or re-appeared) in Paris on concert series, with shorter pieces as well as entire acts of works beginning in the mid 1880s.[72] In 1887, Charles Lamoureux attempted to bring *Lohengrin* to the Eden Théâtre, but the timing of the production was poor: Paris was in an Anti-German furor at the time over the imprisonment of a French police commissioner by German authorities. The right-wing nationalist newspaper *La Revanche* successfully incited enormous demonstrations against Wagner's opera, and the whole enterprise ended in the failure of *Lohengrin* to reach a willing French audience.[73] After this point, however, the popularity of Wagner's operas in France began to soar and hardly a concert went by for the remainder of the century without a Wagner overture or other instrumental excerpt. The first complete Wagner production at the Opéra after *Tannhäuser* took place in 1891 (*Lohengrin* again), with all of the composer's operas

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incomparable, mais sophisme tout de même… [L]es disciples de Wagner, MM. Humperdinck, Vincent d'Indy et Alfred Bruneau, par exemple, sont hors de la tradition gluckiste, chaque fois qu'ils demeurent esclaves de l'esthétique du leitmotiv et qu'ils fuient systématiquement les formes carrées, les vraies formes lyriques."

[72] Two summaries of the rise of Wagner's music in France at the turn of the century may be found in Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 11–21; and Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music, From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1996), 1–7.

[73] For more on *Lohengrin* in Paris during this time period, see Manuela Schwartz, "'La question de *Lohengrin*' zwischen 1869 und 1891," in *Von Wagner zum Wagnérisme: Musik, Literatur, Kunst, Politik*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Manuela Schwartz (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1999), 107–36. A brief summary may also be found in Elaine Brody, *Paris: The Musical Kaleidoscope, 1870–1925* (New York: George Braziller, 1987), 51.

appearing in the following two decades (see Table 3.3). During this period Wagner's works formed the center of the Opéra's repertory; Steven Huebner has pointed no other composers works were performed more frequently at the Opéra after 1890.[74]

**Table 3.3: Wagner Opera Productions in Paris, 1891–1914**

| Opera | Year | Theater |
|---|---|---|
| Lohengrin | 1891 | Opéra |
| L'Or du Rhin | 1893 (two-piano version) | Opéra |
| La Walkyrie | 1893 | Opéra |
| Tannhäuser | 1895 | Opéra |
| Le Vaisseau-Fantôme | 1897 | Opéra-Comique |
| Siegfried | 1901 | Opéra |
| Tristan et Isolde | 1904 | Opéra |
| Les Maîtres Chanteurs | 1907 | Opéra |
| Le Crepuscule des Dieux | 1908 | Opéra |
| L'Or du Rhin | 1909 | Opéra |
| L'Anneau du Nibelung | 1911 | Opéra |
| Parsifal | 1914 | Opéra |

Not coincidentally, it is precisely during this time that all of Gluck's major operas were revived in Paris. Just as *Alceste* followed *Tannhäuser* to the Parisian stage in 1861, so *Orphée* followed on Wagner's heels, appearing at the Opéra-Comique in 1896, less than a year after *Tannhäuser* was produced at the Opéra. The Wagnerian critic Henry Bauer pointed directly to Wagner's success as the main impetus for the revival of Gluck's works:

> The music of the future has become the music of the present. We joyfully applaud this metamorphosis. Drinking each night from the cup of the same

[74] Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle*, 21.

> Titan, does one not experience a bit of satiation, or rather does one not dread the monotony of the grandeur and the power? Then it is necessary to muse on varying the pleasure of the listeners, offering a pure food to the taste which was refined at the table of the God. Such is the genesis of the classical renewal in these past years, the cause of the triumphal revivals of *Orphée*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*, *Alceste*, and finally *Armide*. The tragedy of Gluck has seemed young again in glory and immortality in the vicinity of the *drame lyrique*: Olympus is not at all a contemptible little mount from the view of the summits of Valhalla.[75]

While Bauer's analysis is essentially a partisan celebration of Wagnerism, he makes a good point. Certainly, given the preexisting connection between the two composers, Gluck's works would have appeared to *fin-de-siècle* audiences as a counterpart to Wagner's operas, tempting listeners to compare and contrast them.

While the Opéra had a near-monopoly on Wagner operas (with the exception of the 1897 production of *Der Fliegende Holländer* at the Opéra-Comique), as we have seen, Gluck's works appeared predominantly at the Opéra-Comique. It may be that the Opéra-Comique turned to Gluck's operas to create a counterpart to Wagner's dominance at the Opéra. On one level, at the Opéra-Comique, Gluck presented a less expensive and less esoteric option for those interested in Wagner's music dramas (a sort of poor-man's Wagner). For those who saw Wagner as an interloper, Gluck's use of mythological themes represented a more conservative alternative to *Tristan*, and, importantly, an alternative composed by a French (or "French") composer. Saint-Saëns, for example, points out that the *fin-de-siècle* turn towards mythological subject material was rooted in

[75] *Muscia*, December 1905. "La musique de l'avenir était devenue la musique du présent. Nous applaudissions, joyeux, à cette métamorphose. Depuis, à boire chaque soir à la coupe du même Titan, n'éprouve-t-on pas un peu de satiété, ou plutôt n'a-t-on pas redouté la monotonie de la grandeur et de la puissance ? Lors il fallut songer à varier le plaisir des auditeurs, tout en offrant un pur aliment au goût qui s'était épuré et affiné à la table du Dieu. Telle est la genèse du renouveau classique en ces dernières années, la cause des triomphales reprises d'*Orphée*, d'*Iphigénie en Tauride*, d'*Alceste* et, enfin, d'*Armide*. La tragédie de Gluck a paru jeune encore de gloire et d'immortalité au voisinage du drame lyrique : l'Olympe n'est point un petit mont méprisable à la vue des sommets du Walhalla."

Wagnerism: "Oceans of ink have been spilled in discussing the question of whether the subjects of operas should be taken from history or mythology, and the question is still moot ….The only worthwhile things are whether the music is good and the work interesting. But *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, *Tristan*, and *Siegfried* appeared and the question sprang up."[76]

Further emphasizing the connection between the two composers was the fact that the same few sopranos—undoubtedly the most popular singers in Paris—were performing the leads in both Wagner and Gluck operas, often with similar presentation of the roles both in terms of details like costuming, as well as in the rhetoric surrounding them in the press. After the turn of the century, three main sopranos took the lead in Gluck's works: Rose Caron, Félia Litvinne, and Lucienne Bréval (See Table 3.4). Each of these popular singers was also widely known for her Wagnerian interpretations, and comparisons between their handling of Wagner and Gluck were fairly common in the press. In an article on Bréval in *Le Courrier musical*, for example, Georges Pioch placed her Wagnerian and Gluckian roles side by side, concluding by comparing her style for each:

> [Bréval] found here [in Gluck] the benefits of her willingness to sacrifice, the willingness by which she diminished almost to a whisper the force of the voice that uttered with a heartrending violence the "*hoïotoho*s" of Brünnhilde… It is this willingness that is certainly going to make Lucienne Bréval a spot-on Iphigénie.[77]

[76] Saint-Saëns, *Musical Memories*, 61.

[77] *Le Courrier musical*, 15 December 1907. "Elle [Bréval] trouva ici [dans Gluck] le bénéfice de sa volonté du sacrifice, de cette volonté selon laquelle elle atténue parfois jusqu'au soufflé la voix qui proféra avec une déchirante violence les *hoïotoho* de Brunnhilde… C'est cette volonté…qui va faire certainement de Lucienne Bréval une très exacte Iphigénie."

A review by Jean d'Udine in the same journal described Félia Litvinne singing excerpts of *Armide* in the Concerts Colonne, lauding the singer and opining "I am sure that if one asked Mme Litvinne to confess her secret preference between the death of Armide and the death of Brünnhilde, she would not be able to choose between these two brilliant passages."[78]

Visual depictions of these singers in their Wagner/Gluck roles also reveal similarities. The costumes given to the main characters in Gluck's operas are nearly identical, in fact, to those given to some Wagner heroines—in particular Elsa from *Lohengrin* and Isolde. Compare, for example, the portraits of Litvinne in the roles of Alceste and Isolde found in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 (in 1904 and 1912, respectively). In both representations, Litvinne is shown in long flowing robes denoting the antiquity of the settings of *Alceste* and *Tristan*. Furthermore, both images capture the somber, essentially tragic nature of the roles, portraying their protagonists not sensually (as many contemporary depictions of prima donnas did) but rather as embodiments of the ideal of classical tragedy.

[78] *Le Courrier musical*, 15 April 1906. "Je suis sûr que si l'on demandait à Mme Litvinne d'avouer ses secrètes préférences entre la mort d'Armide et la mort de Brunnhild, elle ne se résoudrait pas à faire un choix entre ces deux pages géniales." Litvinne herself would have likely agreed with this assessment of Gluck's dramatic soprano roles; she wrote rapturously of *Alceste* in her autobiography, and included the work in the "Étude des grands rôles" she included in the text. See Félia Litvinne, *Mon vie et mon art* (Paris: Plon, 1933), 139–42, 233–37.

**Fig. 3.1: Félia Litvinne as Alceste. *Musica,* July 1904.**

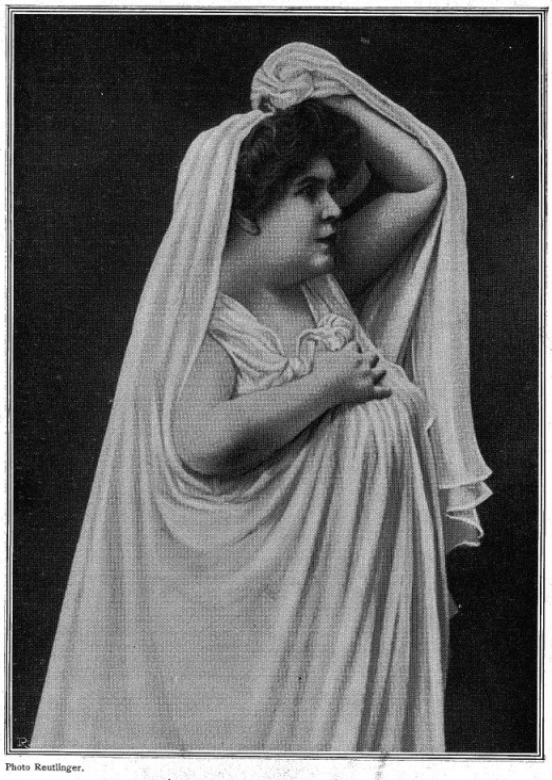

Photo Reutlinger.

Mme FÉLIA LITVINNE DANS LE RÔLE D'ISOLDE

*La pureté de la voix et la noblesse majestueuse des attitudes de Mme Litvinne émeuvent profondément, et dans Isolde atteignent à la plus sublime beauté. Mme Litvinne joua pour la première fois ce rôle magnifique à New-York, avec M. J. de Reszké.*

**Fig. 3.2: Félia Litvinne as Isolde. *Musica*, February 1912.**

**Table 3.4: Prima donnas in Selected Parisian productions of Gluck Operas, 1875–1918**

| Opera | Year | Prima Donna |
|---|---|---|
| *Orphée* | 1896 | Marie Delna |
| *Orphée* | 1899 | Marie Bréma (substitution) |
| *Iphigénie en Tauride* | 1900 | Rose Caron |
| *Iphigénie en Tauride* | 1903 | Rose Caron |
| *Alceste* | 1904 | Félia Litvinne |
| *Armide* | 1905 | Lucienne Bréval |
| *Orphée* | 1905 | Rose Caron |
| *Iphigénie en Aulide* | 1907 | Lucienne Bréval |
| *Orphée* | 1914 | Claire Croiza |

Wagner's pervasive influence on operatic composition in *fin-de-siècle* Paris is well documented. It is clear from the preceding section, however, that what Ernest Chausson referred to as "the red specter of Wagner" affected the reception of earlier music, as well. As a result of the sustained comparisons between the two composers over more than a half century, Gluck's operas were seen in a Wagnerian light to a much greater extent than that by other historical composers. Throughout the turn of the century, Wagner played a major role in how French critics and audiences understood Gluck's musical achievements as well as his place in music history. But the relationship was certainly not one-sided. Even as Wagner became the dominant operatic force in Paris, Gluck's operas continued to offer audiences either an alternative to the fashionable master of Bayreuth or a glimpse at the French origins of his style. Both interpretations served to connect Gluck to Wagner, which—from both pro- and anti-Wagner perspectives—could not help but emphasize Gluck's prominent position in (French) music history.

**Gluck, the Greek Revival, and Politics**

A final contributing factor to the renewed popularity that Gluck's operas enjoyed around 1900 may be found in the subject material of the operas, rather than in the music itself. Like many (perhaps most) eighteenth-century operas, the plots of all of Gluck's works were drawn from Greek mythology, a topic with which *fin-de-siècle* Paris was nothing short of obsessed.[79] In his history of opera (beginning with ancient Greece and culminating in Wagner) Édouard Schuré pointed out an essentially Greek character to Gluck's works even beyond the subject material, noting that if "Beethoven found the universal language of modern humanity, Gluck rediscovered in the language of sounds the immortal essence of the Greek soul and recreated the *tragédie classique* across the world of harmony."[80] For some critics the classical nature of Gluck's opera went beyond mere subject matter. Bellaigue, for example, transferred this "Greek" quality onto the composer himself:

> [By his] magnificence and economy, the composer of *Orphée* is antique. Finally, by pursuit and constant creation of a beauty that, even at the climax, is never distorted, in a word, by all his genius and his soul, he was more a Greek—the last—than Willibald the Bohemian.[81]

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[79] The *fin de siècle*, it is worth noting, was not the first time that a vogue for all things Greek had swept through France. The Greek struggle for independence in the 1820s had caused a wave of philhellenism to briefly unite the divided French society in favor of Greece, a fact that musicians were keen to take advantage of. See Benjamin Walton, *Rossini in Restoration Paris: The Sound of Modern Life* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Chapter 3.

[80] Édouard Schuré, *Le Drame musical*, Revised Ed., 2 Vols. (Paris : Didier, 1886), I : 261–62."Si Beethoven a trouvé la langue universelle de l'humanité modern, Gluck a retrouvé dans le langage des sons l'essence immortelle de l'âme grecque et a recréé la tragédie classique à travers le monde le l'harmonie." Though Schuré avoids directly connecting Wagner to Gluck in this teleological position, he posits Wagner as the modern incarnation of Greek ideals of musical drama, thus creating an oblique connection to Gluck, who was an eighteenth-century incarnation of the same underlying ideals.

[81] *La Revue des deux mondes*, 15 March 1896. "[Par] cette magnificence et cette économie, l'auteur d'*Orphée* est antique. Enfin par la recherche et par la réalisation constante d'une beauté que la passion,

This perspective has a dual purpose; most obviously, for Bellaigue, Gluck was imbued with the Greek qualities that were so fashionable in *fin-de-siècle* Paris. Bellaigue further distanced Gluck from his Germanic origins by pointing out that from "this German, or this Bohemian, three masterworks—the last—were written in French and for France."[82] Thus Bellaigue further reinforced Gluck's position as a prominent figure in *French* music history, rather than being a Germanic, or even universal, composer. Pointing out that those qualities overruled his "Bohemian" place of birth helped make Gluck a more "French" composer, and connecting him with Greek culture contributed to this effort.

Around the turn of the century, the French increasingly came to view themselves as a new incarnation of ancient Greek culture. This interpretation came about partially as a result of the revision of their history to reflect a Gallic, rather than Germanic, past, a process begun in the 1850s and 1860s by Napoleon III.[83] The historical linking of the Gauls to the Greeks led to France being tied genealogically to ancient Greece. Furthermore, as sociologist Athena Leoussi points out,

> the foundation of Marseilles by Greeks was used by the French as a justification of their claim to an unbroken connection with the ancient Greeks—a link which justified French self-esteem and also suggested that the well-known virtues of the Greeks were the inherited elements of the French nation. [84]

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même au paroxysme, ne déforme jamais, en un mot par tout son génie et toute son âme, ce fut bien un Grec—le dernier—que Willibald le Bohémien."

[82] *La Revue des deux mondes*, 15 March 1896. "De cet Allemand, ou de ce Bohémien, trois chefs-d'œuvre–les derniers–furent écrits en français et pour la France."

[83] Athena S. Leoussi, *Nationalism and Classicism: The Classical Body as National Symbol in Nineteenth-Century England and France* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 181.

[84] Leoussi, *Nationalism and Classicism*, 180-81.

A visual example of the growing ideology of France as the new Greece (or, perhaps, as the continuation of the *old* Greece), is Pierre Puvis de Chavannes's *Massalia, colonie Grecque* (1869), which presents a vision of a "Greek" Marseilles. The implication of such a work, of course, is that the culture of Greece was transferred to France via this connection. After the defeat of 1870, the ties (illusory or not) between France and Greece became critical to maintenance of French national identity. Consequently, interpretations of ancient Greece abounded in literature and visual art as well as in music. Many of the leading composers of the time composed works on mythological subjects: Debussy, Ravel, Saint-Saëns, Massenet, and Fauré, to cite only a few examples.[85] Outside the concert halls, Julien Tiersot and other musicologists placed great importance on tracing French music history back to its Greek (and Roman) influences.[86] Furthermore, both the influential music critic Louis Laloy and the composer and musicologist Maurice Emmanuel authored dissertations on ancient Greek musical subjects in the last decade of the nineteenth century.[87]

Some composers turned to the idyllic side of Classicism, focusing on the idealized pastoral lifestyle found in the *Idylls* of Theocritus. The most notable composer to be strongly influenced by this aesthetic was Debussy, who incorporated aspects of Greek

[85] For a thorough analysis of the role of Greek themes in turn-of-the-century French music, see Kerstin Mira Schneider-Seidel, *Antike Sujets und moderne Musik: Untersuchungen zur französischen Musik um 1900* (Stuttgart and Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2002).

[86] Fauser, "Gendering the Nations," 82.

[87] Schneider-Seidel, *Antike Sujets und modern Musik*, 74. Laloy's dissertation concerned Greek music theory and Emmanuel's was on the subject of Greek dance. See also Samuel Baud-Govy, "Maurice Emmanuel et la Grèce," *La Revue Musicale* 410/411 (1988), 109–15. For a brief biographical look at Laloy, see the introduction to *Louis Laloy (1874–1944) on Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky*, trans. and ed. Deborah Priest (Aldershot, UK, and Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1999).

pastoral into his *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, *Trois chansons de Bilitis*, *Syrinx*, and other works.[88] But while this carefree, pleasure-seeking vision of antiquity attracted more "decadent" artists like Debussy, other composers focused on more restrained classical themes in order to oppose the perceived moral decay of French society at the turn of the century. As Eugen Weber has amply demonstrated, around 1900 even the very term "fin de siècle" came to connote the decline of traditional values, and among those "who discussed such things, or listened to the discussion, the debasement and decrepitude of the society and of its values seemed beyond argument."[89] As one might imagine, French culture demonstrated a backlash against this perceived moral lassitude, a trend reflected in a second, more conservative method of approaching Greek subject material. It is within this latter category that the revivals of Gluck operas were located; composers and critics could point to the aspects of Greek tragedy in his operas that upheld traditional values and culture, while at the same time embracing aspects of the "exotic" to be found in the recreation of ancient Greek culture. In the face of the ostensibly declining importance of the family in French culture, for example, audiences and critics could turn to the *Iphigénie* operas and *Alceste* for works that would highlight the importance of family bonds. Similarly, in comparison with the literary prominence of adultery (on the part of both men and women), *Orphée* presents a plot focusing on the lengths gone to restore a married couple, complete with happy ending—a sharp contrast to the

[88] On Debussy and the pastoral mode , see David J. Code, "A Song Not Purely His Own: Modernism and the Pastoral Mode in Mallarmé, Debussy and Matisse" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of California at Berkeley, 1999). I have also briefly examined Debussy's attraction to the idealized Greece of the pastoral in my "Debussy as Storyteller: Narrative Expansion in the *Trois chansons de Bilitis*." *Current Musicology* 85 (Spring 2008): 7–28.

[89] Eugen Weber, *France: Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986), 11–12. Weber extensively treats the idea of the decadence of Parisian society in Chapter 1.

protagonists of *Tristan und Isolde* or *Pelléas et Mélisande*, to name only two operas popular at the *fin-de-siècle*.[90]

The subject matter of Gluck's operas also suggest a more directly political reading in the context of *fin-de-siècle* Paris, which was in many ways still in a state of national mourning following its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War—a state that lasted essentially until the end of World War I. The events of 1870 were not commonly addressed directly in opera, with the notable exception of Alfred Bruneau's *L'Attaque du moulin*, based on the literary work by Émile Zola, in which a rural Alsatian village and its occupants are devastated by the effects of the war. Such realist subject matter was largely foreign (literally and figuratively) to the stages of the Opéra, and even the more progressive Opéra-Comique. Steven Huebner points out that in the case of *L'Attaque du moulin*, the setting was even pushed back 100 years for the first Parisian production—becoming a tale of the Revolution rather than of the Franco-Prussian War—at least partially in order to avoid unduly upsetting the audience.[91] Given the implicit restrictions on depicting images likely to stir too-fresh emotions in audiences, opera producers and composers who sought to tap into the postwar national grief had to find another way.

The use of allegorical subject material, or at least subject material that could be perceived as allegorical, was a reasonable alternative to the straightforward visual representation of the Franco-Prussian War.[92] A number of visual artists took advantages

[90] As I discuss in the case study of this chapter, however, others focused on the lamentations of Orpheus rather than on his eventual reunion with Eurydice. On the supposed decline of the family in *fin-de-siècle* Paris, see Nicholas White, *The Family in Crisis in Late Nineteenth-Century French Fiction* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Roddey Reid, *Families in Jeopardy: Regulating the Social Body in France, 1750–1910* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

[91] Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle*, 416–17.

of the potential for allegory, perhaps most importantly Puvis de Chavannes. His *Le Ballon* and *Le Pigeon voyageur* (1870-71) allegorically depict the isolation of Paris under siege.[93] In the years that followed, Puvis continued to paint works that have been interpreted to refer allegorically to the Franco-Prussian War. The painting *Hope* (1872), for example, depicts a female (nude in the smaller version of the work, clad in a white dress in the larger) holding aloft a sapling as dawn breaks on the horizon, with ruins and graves visible in the background of the painting. The time period reflected in the painting is ambiguous; the woman's clothing is caught between antiquity and modernity, and the ruins in the background are ambiguously classical in origin. Any (deliberate) temporal confusion aside, the clear subject of the painting is the rebirth of France in the wake of disaster, with France represented by the young woman (see Fig 3.3).

A similar argument might be made for the painting *Death and the Maidens* (1872) by the same artist, which depicts Death approaching a group of women in vaguely Greek white dresses. As art historian Brian Petrie has pointed out, "it may well be felt that here was a comment on the irresponsible France of the years immediately preceding the War."[94] Here again France is represented by the Greek female form. Puvis's placement of his allegorical works in ancient Greece (or, arguably, a France that evokes ancient

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[92] Visual artists turned to the same allegorical techniques. Leoussi has pointed out the dramatic number of works on Greek subject material after the Franco-Prussian War, as these safely distanced themes could stand in for French ones, as when, for example, the siege of Athens could evoke the siege of Paris in 1870. Leoussi, *Nationalism and Classicism*, 180–185.

[93] For a discussion of the allegorical content of these paintings, see Hollis Clayson, *Paris in Despair: Art and Everyday Life Under Siege (1870–1871)* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), Chapter 5.

[94] Brian Petrie, *Puvis de Chavanne*, ed. Simon Lee (Aldershot, UK, and Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1997), 82.

Greece) is effective only in the event that his audience would understand the connection between Greek and French cultures.

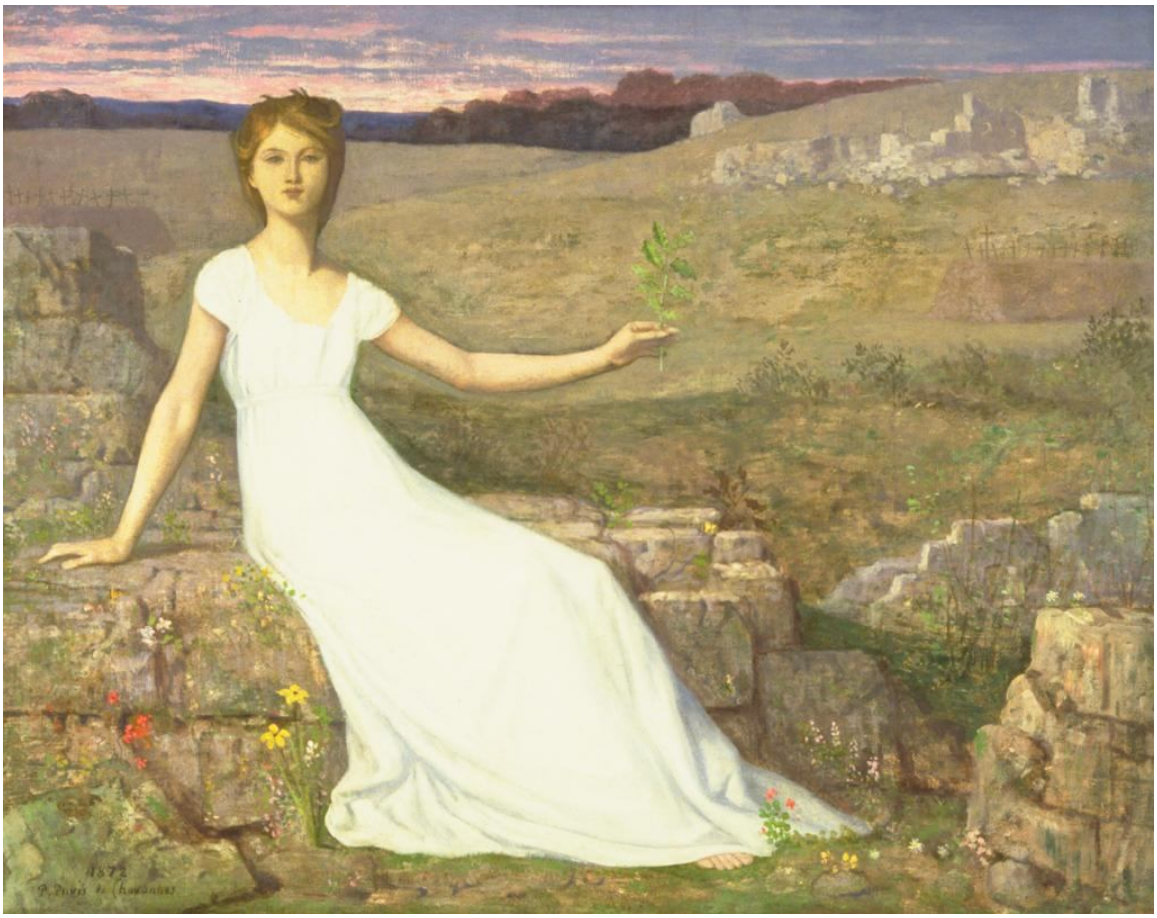

**Fig. 3.3: Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, *Hope* (1872, Larger Version). The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, MD.**

This connection is further demonstrated by Puvis's work for the Hôtel de Ville, which was reconstructed in the 1880s after its destruction in the War. His murals *Summer* and *Winter* were installed in the building in 1891 and 1892, respectively. *Summer*, of more relevance to this study, presents the viewer with yet another idyllic Greek scene, this time of men, women, and children in various states of undress bathing in a river. Given the placement of the work in the Hôtel de Ville, the work was, as Jennifer Shaw

tells us, "universally assumed to be an image of France."[95] Shaw goes on to reveal the republican stake in such Classical imagery:

> The degree and kind of classical heritage pictured in *Summer* became one issue around which debates over the ideal nature of France crystallized. In the 1890s classicism came to signify much more than a painterly or literary style. It became a politically embattled category, appropriated (like nationalism) by a variety of groups on the Right even while republicans tried to reclaim it and transmute its meanings back to their own purposes....As the numerous examples of classical subject matter in the Hôtel de Ville make clear, the state still wanted to promote its possession of the classical legacy.[96]

Clearly, many French critics at the *fin de siècle* understood that representations of Greece *were*, in fact, representations of early France. Greek themes in art, therefore, had the potential be understood as referring allegorically to modern France.

In theater, as well, Greek subject material was a major presence on the stage. A production of Sophocles's *Antigone* at the Comédie-Française in 1893—with incidental music by Saint-Saëns, a recognized authority on Greek music—was exceedingly well received. A critic for *Le Figaro*, for example, wrote that it was "one of the most instructive and most moving demonstrations of art of the past few years."[97] For his part, the critic René Doumic found that Saint-Saëns's music pushed the music "close to the eminently French genre of the opéra comique," suggesting a growing connection at the

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[95] Jennifer H. Shaw, *Dream States: Puvis de Chavannes, Modernism, and the Fantasy of France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 161.

[96] Shaw, *Dream States*, 162–63.

[97] *Le Figaro*, 22 November 1893. "l'une des plus instructives et des plus émouvantes manifestations d'art de ces dernières années…" For an analysis of this production, see Sylvie Humbert-Mougin, *Dionysos revisité : Les tragiques grecs en France de Leconte de Lisle à Claudel* (Paris: Belin, 2003), 182-88.

*fin-de-siècle* between Greek drama and opera.[98] Furthermore, under the direction of André Antoine, the Odéon produced a number of classical Greek works in the years between 1896 and 1912.[99] In addition to these revivals, a number of modern playwrights reworked classical tragedies in modern ways. As Sylvie Humbert-Mougin has pointed out, "the years from 1890-1910 saw a flourishing of symbolic or allegorical plays, in which myth is liberally reworked in view of an edifying, moral, or political message."[100] One example is André Gide's *Philoctète, ou Le Traité des trois morales* (1899), an adaptation of Sophocles's play (which was itself translated for the stage in 1896 and 1900). In Gide's version, as Humbert-Mougin tells us, the myth is "seriously reworked around the theme of sacrifice, which becomes central."[101] This quasi-symbolist adaptation was widely interpreted as allegorical, although interpretations varied widely, including the possibility of the work being a reflection of the tumultuous Dreyfus affair.[102]

Though the opera is not Greek in subject material, Steven Huebner has presented Saint-Saëns's *Étienne Marcel* (1879) as one example of a musical work that can be read in a similar allegorical way.[103] In the opera, which tells the story of the medieval

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[98] *Le Moniteur universel*, 27 November 1893. "vers le genre éminemment français de l'opéra-comique."

[99] Humbert-Mougin, *Dionysos revisité*, 188–92.

[100] Humbert-Mougin, *Dionysos revisité*, 77. "les années 1890–1910 voient fleurir des pieces symboliques ou allégoriques, où le mythe antique est librement retravaillé en vue d'un message édifiaent, moral ou politique."

[101] Humbert-Mougin, *Dionysos revisité*, 79. "Le mythe antique y est profondément retravaillé autour du thème du sacrifice qui devient ici centrale."

[102] Humbert-Mougin, *Dionysos revistié*, 80.

[103] Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin-de-Siècle,* 214–16. In typically eloquent fashion, Saint-Saëns himself calls into question the distinction between mythological and historical subject material for operas at the *fin de siècle*: "It is a question whether there is any essential difference between history and mythology. History

Frenchman's open rebellion against the monarchy, "the authors played up a transparent connection to the Paris Commune of 1871 in order to enhance the *aesthetic* experience of contemporary audiences….Defeat by a foreign power; rebellion in Paris; a revolutionary vanguard in the face of weakened central authority; the quick collapse of demagogues: all this engaged recent memories."[104] Furthermore, Paul Bertagnolli has recently called attention to allegorical reading of the Prometheus myth found in cantatas by Saint-Saëns and Augusta Holmès, the latter work (unfinished) being a musical reflection on the Franco-Prussian War.[105] If new works could be written with allegorical overtones in order to take advantage of the postwar culture of mourning, why not use older operas as well? Gluck's works present such a possibility; *Orphée, Alceste, Iphigénie en Auride,* and *Iphigénie en Tauride* each present stories of dramatic sacrifice in the face of senseless oppression, and, moreover, present a positive resolution to the conflict (a feature unavailable in classical tragedy). Though presenting Gluck's works only as allegories of the twentieth-century French cultural climate would be overly simplistic, it is nonetheless plausible that the Greek subjects echoed the themes of sacrifice and tragic loss prevalent in the national mourning that typified the decades following the Franco-Prussian War, particularly as more Right-wing nationalistic movements began to gain momentum in France.[106]

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is made up of what probably happened; mythology of what probably did not happen. There are myths in history and history in myths. Mythology is merely the old form of history." Saint-Saëns, *Musical Memories*, 62.

[104] Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle*, 214.

[105] Paul A. Bertagnolli, *Prometheus in Music: Representations of the Myth in the Romantic Era* (Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 204–31.

From France's perspective, perhaps the greatest tragedy of the Franco-Prussian war was the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine to the German Empire; in the decades following the war the loss continued to be a major rallying point for French nationalism until the eventual return of the "lost provinces" in 1919. Sentimental depictions of Alsace and Lorraine were a common theme in literature around the turn of the century, perhaps most notably in the perennially popular short stories of Alphonse Daudet, including "Alsace! Alsace!" and "La Dernière Classe."[107] In a study of *fin-de-siècle* guidebooks to Alsace-Lorraine, Douglas Mackaman has pointed out the consistently emotional and strongly nationalistic rhetoric surrounding the provinces, memorializing the traumatic defeat of 1870.[108] The main feature of historical and artistic representations of the lost provinces is the consistent use of the imagery of sacrifice. In 1918, for example, Lucien Gallois (a professor at the Université de Paris) asked: "Is it necessary to recall the solemn and touching protest which the two sacrificed provinces made? Without a word of complaint, with thanks to those who had defended them, they voiced their infinite sorrow and their unshaken hope…."[109] This description could be almost without alteration be used to describe *Iphigénie en Aulide*, with Agamemnon's unfortunate daughter substituting for Alsace. The infamous letter to the French government from Alsatian Mgr Freppel, quoted again and again in the following decades, sets the tone for this

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[106] On the rise of nationalistic movements in France during the early twentieth century, see Eugen Weber, *The Nationalist Revival in France, 1905–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968). On the Right-Wing uses of concert music, see Fulcher, "The Concert as Political Propaganda."

[107] On the impact of the Franco-Prussian War on French nationalist literature, see Catharine Savage Brosman, *Visions of War in France: Fiction, Art, Ideology* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 108–27.

[108] Douglas Mackaman, "Regaining the 'Lost Provinces': Textual Battles for Alsace-Lorraine and the First World War," in *World War I and the Cultures of Modernity*, ed. Douglas Mackaman and Michael Mays (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2000), 125–34.

[109] Lucien Gallois, "Alsace-Lorraine and Europe," *The Geographical Review* 6 (1918), 103.

interpretation of the events of 1870: "And will France, Sire, France which can be defeated but not destroyed, accept in the future a situation to which it is forced to submit today? For her [France], to cede Alsace is equivalent to the sacrifice of a mother from whom one wrests a child who does not wish to be separated from her."[110] Édouard Schuré (also the author of *Le Drame musical* [1886]) similarly wrote in 1916 that "the result of the war of 1870 was a disaster for Alsace-Lorraine. Its annexation to Germany wrested from the mother country [*mère patrie*] two provinces that had become French with every fiber of their beings."[111] In both these descriptions, the parental France is forced to sacrifice a child/province to the onslaught of the Prussians. Given the fact that the loss of Alsace-Lorraine weighed heavily on the national consciousness (and conscience) at the *fin-de-siècle*, it seems likely that seeing similar themes reflected on the operatic stage would strike a resonant chord.[112]

Gluck's operas offered a powerful instrument for this politically resonant chord at the *fin de siècle*. *Orphée et Eurydice*, for example, begins with the lament of the hero over the untimely loss of his beloved. After the initial mourning, Orphée loudly proclaims his intent to combat fickle fate and to seize Eurydice back from the land of the dead. Although he loses her again by violating his commandment not to look back, his

[110] Reprinted in Stéphen Coubé, *Alsace, Lorraine et France rhénane* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1915), 111–12: "Et la France, Sire, la France qui peut être vaincue mais non anéantie, acceptera-t-elle dans l'avenir une situation qu'on la forcerait de subir aujourd'hui? Pour elle, céder l'Alsace équivaut au sacrifice d'une mère à laquelle on arrache l'enfant qui ne veut pas se séparer d'elle."

[111] Édouard Schuré, *L'Alsace française: Rêves et combats* (Paris: Perrin, 1916), 123: "Le résultat de la guerre de 1870 fut un désastre pour l'Alsace-Lorraine. Son annexation à l'Allemagne arrachait à la mère patrie deux provinces devenues françaises par toutes leurs fibres."

[112] On the prominence of Alsace-Lorraine in *fin-de*-siècle Paris, see, for example, Jules Duhem, *La Question d'Alsace-Lorraine, de 1871 à 1914* (Paris: Alcan, 1917), in which the author points out that "two points above all have captured the attention of the major players in the drama [of Alsace-Lorraine]: the territorial cession, and consequently the lamentable situation of the annexed populations." (p. 4) ["deux points surtout ont fixé l'attention des grands personnages du drame: la cession territoriale, et, par voie de conséquence, la situation lamentable des populations annexées." ]

moving affection and his efforts to liberate his wife please the gods, and Eurydice is finally restored to her rightful place at Orphée's side. The parallels between this familiar story and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine are obvious. Orphée could be seen as standing in for the French state—the pining husband deprived of his bride. Euridice, wrested by cruel gods from her beloved husband, evokes the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. The apparent senselessness of her demise is a crucial point. She has died through no fault of her own, and with no evident motivation. In the same way, the French rhetoric surrounding the Franco-Prussian War invariably depicted the French as blameless in the conflict, and the Germans as brutish.

The theme of female (particularly virgin) abduction was used more than once in reference to the loss of Alsace-Lorraine after the Franco-Prussian War. Perhaps the most prominent example (though lost today) is Frémiet's sculpture *Gorille emportant la Vénus de Milo* (c. 1871), which depicts a gorilla abducting the famous sculpture. To quote Leoussi again, the sculpture is

> an account of the conquest of Alsace-Lorraine, with the Prussians represented by the gorilla as an indication of their animal-like barbarism and of their biological primitivism; Alsace-Lorraine is represented by the *Venus de Milo*, the representation of cities and countries in the shape of women being a traditional convention in western art.[113]

The substitution of Eurydice for the *Venus de Milo* is not so difficult to imagine, and in *Orphée* the menacing furies make an effective alternative to the barbaric gorilla of Frémier's sculpture. One might also point out that the role of Orphée was taken by a

[113] Leoussi, *Nationalism and Classicism*, 195.

woman, rendering the connection between Orphée and the "motherland" more apparent, as France (*la* France) was typically depicted iconographically as female.[114]

Other reinterpretations of Gluck operas in light of the Franco-Prussian War are easy to envision. Both of the *Iphigénie* operas, for example, deal primarily with the subject of sacrifice. In *Iphigénie en Aulide*, the eponymous heroine is destined to be sacrificed to the goddess Diana by her father Agamemnon for the greater good of her homeland. Iphigénie, far from shirking her duty to her nation, demands to be sacrificed even in the midst of a battle waged to protect her. Only at the last minute does Diana change her mind and allow Iphigénie to live and spare her father from having to make such a sacrifice. Again, the gods are presented as fickle; the ultimate sacrifices demanded of both Agamemnon and Iphigénie are seemingly out of proportion with the trespass committed: Agamemnon unknowingly killed of one of Diana's favorite stags. The theme of sacrifice is prominent in *Iphigénie en Tauride*, as well, which focuses on the impending sacrifice of Oreste (Iphigénie's brother), which Iphigénie herself is required to perform through unfortunate twists of fate. As in *Aulide*, this tragic conclusion is only narrowly avoided in the end by a battle retaking the prisoners (both Oreste and Iphigénie) from their foreign captors. Again, Oreste and Iphigénie are presented as blameless in the whole ordeal, merely the pawns of a tragic fate.

Gluck's operas, then, represented an opportunity for Parisian audiences to see works on stage that reflected their own national concerns. At the same time, however, the fact that all these operas were set in ancient Greece provided an appropriate historical and geographical distance between the subject material and its listeners. They thus allowed an

[114] For a brief overview of the female iconographic representation of France, see Brosman, *Visions of War in France*, 44–48.

artistic expression for the growing "revanchist" sentiment of the 1880s and beyond without tainting the Opéra or Opéra-Comique with overtly political works. While critics never to my knowledge directly connected Gluck's works with political thought, it is certain that the idea of sacrifice was a major point in the reception of Gluck's works. And, moreover, sacrifice with which audiences could sympathize. Rolland eloquently summarized such a sentiment in 1905:

> Gluck's art is profoundly human. In contrast with the mythological tragedies of Rameau, he remains on the earth: his heroes are men; their joys and their sorrows are sufficient for him. He has sung of the most pure passions: married love in *Orphée* and in *Alceste*, the love of a father and daughter in *Iphigénie en Aulide*, fraternal love and friendship in *Iphigénie en Tauride*, selfless love, sacrifice, the offering of the self for those that one loves.[115]

Thus Gluck provided audiences with the best of both worlds. His mythological subject material remained distant enough from modern politics to avoid explicit connections, but the plot material and "humanness" of the characters allowed audiences to express national grief through the onstage tragedy.

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The key to Gluck's *fin-de-siècle* success lay in the fact that his operas looked both forward and backward in time. They were old enough to serve as a critical part of the nationalist mission of the Operatic Museum; their constant presence at the Opéra-Comique, in particular, provided audiences with constant reminders of the greatness of

[115] Rolland, *Musiciens d'autrefois*, 246: "L'art de Gluck est profondément humain. Par opposition aux tragédies mythologiques de Rameau, il reste sur la terre : ses héros sont des hommes ; leurs joies et leurs douleurs lui suffisent. Il a chanté des passions les plus pures : l'amour conjugal dans *Orphée* et dans *Alceste*, l'amour paternel et l'amour filial dans *Iphigénie en Aulide*, l'amour fraternel et l'amitié dans *Iphigénie en Tauride*, l'amour désintéressé, le sacrifice, le don de soi-même à ceux qu'on aime."

French opera in the eighteenth-century. Simultaneously, Gluck's works were able to reflect the preoccupations of the early twentieth-century society on stage, proving again and again their relevance to modern audiences. My case study for this chapter, the 1896 production of *Orphée* at the Opéra-Comique, will examine the beginnings of this dual positioning of Gluck's work as both ancient and modern.

**Case Study: *Orphée et Eurydice*, 1896**

It is fitting that an opera about resurrection led to Gluck's return to Parisian stages. In March 1896, after an absence of three decades, *Orphée* appeared at the Opéra-Comique, setting the tone for the resurgence of interest in the composer's operas that would last for more than a decade.[116] The production was an event of considerable artistic importance—the critic Léon Garnier lauded it in his review as "the greatest and most powerful dramatic effort of modern times."[117] But however much the long-awaited return of *Orphée* was a major musical event, it is worth pointing out again that although Gluck's operas had been long absent from Parisian stages, excerpts from his works had remained mainstays of the concert repertoire for decades. Julien Tiersot, who had been less than four years old the last time a Gluck opera played in Paris, reported in his review of *Orphée* in *Le Ménestrel* that "if those from my generation still have not been able to see Gluck's works in a single Parisian theater, at least we have been students in the cult of the

[116] I am not considering here the isolated few productions of *Orphée* by a visiting opera troupe in 1889, performed at the Théâtre de la Gaîté. The production does not seem to have been particularly successful, and critics almost universally ignored it when writing about the 1896 *Orphée*. Popular opinion about the 1889 production is perhaps best summed up by the critic for *Le Temps*: "It was truly a massacre to play Gluck's music like this" ("C'était un massacre, en vérité, que de jouer ainsi du Gluck") *Le Temps*, 15 March 1896.

[117] *L'Europe artiste*, 15 March 1896. "le plus grand et le plus puissant effort dramatique des temps modernes."

old master, and his music has become familiar to us thanks to the frequent performances that have been given at symphonic concerts."[118] For those younger members of the Gluck "cult," the anticipation of finally being able to see one of Gluck's works in a fully staged version must have been tremendous, and the expectations for the production enormous.

The 1896 production of *Orphée* in effect represented the opening of the Operatic Museum—the first time in the "modern" era that an opera from the distant past was being put on public display as an object of veneration. At the same time, as museum displays often do, the production encouraged critics and audiences to find modern relevance within *Orphée*, an approach that led to the opera's association with Symbolism, an artistic movement that was from its inception heavily steeped in Wagnerism. In this case study I will explore how the 1896 production of *Orphée* reignited questions regarding Gluck and Wagner that had smoldered for decades, resulting in a Wagnerian shadow looming over Gluck during the *fin de siècle*. Moreover, I will demonstrate how that Wagnerian shadow, combined with the opera's subject matter, encouraged audiences to interpret Gluck's *Orphée* in the light of Symbolist aesthetics. Such an interpretation demonstrated that eighteenth-century opera, far from being only of academic interest or historical, could be culturally relevant and meaningful to modern audiences.

However much audiences and critics chose to read *Orphée* as a modern event, for some older critics the 1896 production turned instead to the past, calling to mind the revivals of *Orphée* and *Alceste* the Théâtre-Lyrique in 1859 and 1861, respectively—the only staged versions of those works that would have been in living memory for *fin-de-siècle* audiences. These productions, both starring Pauline Viardot and created under the

[118] *Le Ménestrel*, 8 March 1896."…si ceux de ma génération n'avaient encore pu voir les œuvres de Gluck sur aucun théâtre de Paris, du moins avons-nous été élevés dans le culte du vieux maître, et sa musique nous est devenue familière, grâce aux auditions fréquentes qu'en ont données les concerts symphoniques."

musical "supervision" of Hector Berlioz, thus had some impact on how the 1896 *Orphée* was received.[119] Marie Delna, the soprano charged with the opera's title role, was compared in almost every review to Viardot, whose interpretation of Orphée was legendary by the end of the century. Further common ground between the 1859 *Orphée* and the 1896 revival was found in the form of the director. Both productions, as well as the 1861 *Alceste*, were the product of the savvy business mind of Léon Carvalho, who had been the director of the Théâtre-Lyrique at the time of the Gluck productions there, and who moved to the Opéra-Comique a few years before the *Orphée* revival.

The last decades of the nineteenth century were financially difficult for that theater, not least because of the 1887 fire that destroyed the Salle Favart (where the Opéra-Comique was located), resulting in a temporary relocation to the Place du Châtelet, which had previously housed the Théâtre-Lyrique.[120] Perhaps the financial hardships of the Opéra-Comique and the familiar location encouraged Carvalho to revisit one of his greatest successes at the Théâtre-Lyrique. As Paul Rameau points out in *Le Temps*, however, these two productions had their differences:

> The *Orphée* that M. Carvalho has presented us with is not exactly the *Orphée* that he himself presented in 1859. There are differences in the text, in the sets, and the interpretation is quite different. In 1859, Pauline Viardot—who was Orphée before, an inimitable Orphée—sang at the end of the first act an aria that Nourrit in the past and Mlle Delna today replaced with an aria taken from *Echo et Narcisse*.[121]

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[119] The 1866 revival of *Alceste*, which featured Marie Battu in the title role, made little impression on critics, being largely a recreation of the 1861 Berlioz/Viardot production.

[120] Raphaëlle Legrand and Nicole Wild, *Regards sur l'opéra-comique: Trois siècles de vie théâtrale* (Paris: CNRS, 2002), 149, 168.

[121] *Le Temps*, 15 March 1896. "L'*Orphée* que nous a donné M. Carvalho n'est pas tout à fait l'*Orphée* qu'il a donné, lui-même, en 1859. Il y a des différences de texte, de mise en scène ; et l'interprétation ne se ressemble pas. En 1859, Mme Pauline Viardot—qui était l'Orphée d'alors, un Orphée inimitable,—chantait

Despite these differences, critics found the productions to be similar. Hughes Imbert, for example, opined in *Le Guide musical* that "This production reminds us also of the superb performance given by Mme Viardot in the role of Orphée in 1859."[122] He was not alone in making this comparison; the connections between the 1859/1861 productions of Gluck's operas encouraged *fin-de-siècle* critics to revisit the same music-philosophical issues that had filled the feuilletons decades before, centered principally on the relative positions of Gluck and Wagner.

Once again critics were divided into pro- and anti-Wagnerian camps, using reviews of *Orphée* and studies of its composer to wage another battle in the perennial war over the nature of opera and the merits of German music. These tensions were never far below the surface of *fin-de-siècle* music criticism, as Wagner's increasing prominence in the 1890s created a sustained sense of either uneasiness or triumph for critics and audiences alike. Only five years before *Orphée*, the 1891 production of *Lohengrin* at the Opéra had led to what Manuela Schwartz refers to as the "second *Lohengrin* scandal," in which (among other difficulties), a large crowd assembled to protest the work's performance.[123] In 1893, *Die Walküre* was performed at the same theater, followed in 1895 by a production of *Tannhäuser*. This last work was a milestone in French Wagner reception, as it contrasted dramatically with the turmoil that had surrounded the work's first performance in Paris. The fact that *Orphée* followed a year later is noteworthy: it

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à la fin du premier acte, un air que Nourrit autrefois, et Mlle Delna aujourd'hui ont remplacé par un air tiré d'*Echo et Narcisse*."

[122] *Le Guide musical*, 8 March 1896. "Cette représentation nous remémorait également la superbe interprétation qu'avait donnée Mme Viardot du rôle d'Orphée en l'année 1859."

[123] Schwartz, " 'La question de *Lohengrin*' zwischen 1869 und 1891," 131.

seems that Gluck was always to follow close on Wagner's heels into the Paris opera houses.

Many critics used *Orphée* to call renewed attention to Gluck's dramatic ideas. In *La Nouvelle Revue*, for example, the Wagnerian librettist and critic Louis Gallet wrote:

> Regarding Gluck's *Orphée*, which has just been given at the Opéra-Comique, one is pleased to again bring the famous theories of the illustrious composer into the spotlight; we ourselves have many times recalled them here in regards to the definition of the true *drame lyrique*, the character of which the preface to *Alceste* has determined very purely.[124]

Alfred Bruneau, reviewing the production for *Le Figaro*, devoted a substantial portion of his review to quoting extensively from this preface in order to praise Gluck's dramatic conceptions. Bruneau went a step farther, claiming that it "is impossible—one can see—to better express, to define more clearly, more neatly, the noble and lofty ambitions of today's musicians."[125] By "today's musicians," Bruneau is surely referring to his own work as a composer and to that of his circle of colleagues and friends—a group whose compositional aims were heavily influenced by Wagner's theories. Indeed, in his *La Musique française* (1901) Bruneau would characterize his operas as being a combination of Wagnerian and Gluckian elements.[126] His review of *Orphée* essentially takes for granted a connection between the styles of these two composers, supporting the assertion

[124] *La Nouvelle revue*, March/April 1896. "A propos de l'*Orphée* de Gluck, que vient de nous donner l'Opéra-Comique, on s'est plu à remettre en lumière les théories fameuses de l'illustre compositeur ; nous-mêmes les avons maintes fois rappelées ici, à propos de la définition du véritable drame lyrique, dont la préface d'*Alceste* a très purement déterminé le caractère…"

[125] *Le Figaro*, 7 March 1896. "Il est impossible—on le voit—d'exprimer mieux, de définir plus clairement, plus nettement les nobles et hautes ambitions des musiciens d'aujourd'hui."

[126] Huebner, *French Opera at the* Fin de Siècle, 401.

that the Wagnerian (or perhaps post-Wagnerian) composers of the *fin de siècle* were recreating Gluck's eighteenth-century innovations in a contemporary musical language.

Not all critics shared the notion that Gluck's and Wagner's theories were compatible. The widely-read musicologist Camille Bellaigue wrote in *La Revue des deux mondes* that "Gluck's *Orphée* is singular in the sense that Gluck's dramatic conception, like Monteverdi's in another time, and contrary to Wagner's, is human and practical. Gluck had no philosophical pretensions. He was not at all seeking to solve the enigma of the world."[127] Gluck is portrayed as a practical musician, in contrast to Wagner's "philosophical pretensions." Bellaigue continued:

> It is from the point of view of declamation that one never misses a chance these days to compare, to assimilate, Wagner and Gluck. One goes away repeating that the one or the other were servants, worshippers of the language, to which they have sacrificed everything, even the music. Perhaps one should listen. If Gluck and Wagner meet and agree here in theory, in practice they diverge and oppose each other entirely. One could not find two styles more opposed than theirs to understand and to regulate the role of the words. While with Wagner it serves only to determine the subject, the situation, the sentiment that the orchestra is charged with creating, with Gluck the language itself—and it alone—is the method or the agent of the expression; in it lies the centre or the summit of the work, and the seat of the beauty. In a word, the text is what one could with the least trouble remove from the Wagnerian *drame lyrique*; but even a small betrayal or alteration of it would destroy Gluck's *drame lyrique* in a single blow.[128]

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[127] *La Revue des deux mondes*, 15 March 1896. "…l'*Orphée* de Gluck est individuel en ce sens, que la conception dramatique de Gluck, ainsi qu'autrefois celle de Monteverde, et contrairement à celle de Wagner, est humaine et concrète. Gluck n'a pas de prétentions philosophiques. Il ne cherche point à résoudre l'énigme du monde."

[128] *La Revue des deux mondes*, 15 March 1896. "C'est à la point de vue de la déclamation qu'on ne manque jamais aujourd'hui de comparer, d'assimiler Wagner et Gluck. On s'en va répétant que l'un et l'autre ont été les serviteurs, les adorateurs du verbe ils ont tout sacrifié même la musique. Peut-être faudrait-il s'entendre. Si Gluck et Wagner se rencontrent et s'accordent ici en théorie, dans la pratique ils se séparent et s'opposent jusqu'à la contradiction. On ne saurait trouver deux manières plus opposées que les leurs de comprendre et de régler le rôle de la parole. Tandis que chez Wagner elle ne sert qu'à la détermination du sujet, de la situation, du sentiment que l'orchestre est chargé de rendre, chez Gluck elle est elle-même – elle seule parfois – le mode ou l'agent de l'expression ; en elle est le centre ou le sommet de l'œuvre, et comme le siège de la beauté. En un mot la parole est ce qu'on pourrait avec le moins de dommage enlever au

Here, in praising Gluck and his techniques, Bellaigue manages to deliver some stinging rebukes to Wagner. Unlike much of the anti-Wagnerian criticism of the 1860s, Bellaigue seems concerned chiefly with Wagner's music, rather than his theories. While the artistic credos of the two composers might superficially be very similar in terms of the respective roles of music and text, in the actual implementation of these techniques Bellaigue found Wagner's music to be profoundly lacking.

Despite the importance of the continued direct comparisons between Wagner and Gluck, some aspects of the Wagnerian influence on the reception of the 1896 *Orphée* were considerably more subtle. By 1896 Wagnerism had infiltrated French society much more deeply than simple appreciation (or adulation) of the composer's music and compositional concepts; Wagner's writings, in particular, exerted a strong influence over the visual and literary arts. It comes as no surprise, then, that the *fin-de-siècle* understanding of *Orphée* was colored by another prominent artistic trend of the time, also deeply rooted in Wagner's aesthetic ideas: Symbolism. Indeed, the aesthetic values promoted by the master of Bayreuth formed the cornerstone of the Symbolist movement in France; a leading Symbolist journal of the *fin-de-siècle* was the *Revue wagnerienne* (1885–1888), to which every major Symbolist thinker in Paris at the time was a contributor.[129] In the words of literary theorist Eva Kushner, in this Symbolist culture

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drame lyrique wagnérien ; mais si peu qu'on la trahisse ou qu'on l'altère, voilà d'un seul coup le drame lyrique de Gluck anéanti."

[129] For more on the importance of the *Revue wagnerienne* in Symbolist culture, see Pamela A. Genova, *Symbolist Journals: A Culture of Correspondence* (Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002) and Kelly Jo Maynard, "The Enemy Within: Encountering Wagner in Third-Republic France" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 2007).

"Wagner reigned as a god."[130] By the end of the century, the constant juxtaposition of Gluck's ideology and works with Wagner's would doubtless have encouraged audiences to see *Orphée* through a Wagnerian/Symbolist lens.

Ironically, the ancient subject matter of Gluck's opera facilitated approaching it as a "modern" work. *Fin-de-siècle* Paris was fascinated by Greek antiquity in general, and the Greek/Gallic "origins" of the French people in particular. As we have already seen, this fascination played a major role in how critics understood the revival Gluck's operas in general, and why their topics struck such a chord with opera audiences. Capitalizing on the popularity of Classical themes was especially important for framing this first Gluck production of the *fin de siècle*. Other theaters were certainly doing so: in 1893, the Comédie-Française's production of *Antigone* was described by one as "one of the most instructive and moving artistic events of these past years."[131] In October 1896 (after the production of *Orphée*, although certainly the plans were in place well before), the Odéon began a series of Greek works on their "classical Thursdays," which were designed to both entertain and educate audiences in the classics of the stage. The theater's directors, newly appointed in that year, made it abundantly clear that the presentation of classical repertoire was a major issue:

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[130] Eva Kushner, *Le Mythe d'Orphée dans la littérature française contemporaine* (Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1961), 100–101. "Wagner régnait en dieu." Kushner goes on to say that "He embodied for all these fervent disciples "the complete artwork," at the heart of which fine art and music are called to support literature. These symbolists followed Wagner all the way to his philosophical conceptions, speaking like him of the true essence of things, which oppose their appearances." ["Il incarnait pour tous ces disciples fervents "l'art complet," au sein duquel art plastique et musique sont appelés à appuyer la littérature. Ces symbolistes suivaient Wagner jusque ses conceptions philosophiques, parlant comme lui de la véritable essence des choses, qui opposée à leurs apparences."]

[131] *Le Journal des débats*, 22 November 1893. "l'une des plus instructive et des plus émouvantes manifestations d'art de ces dernières années." Quoted in Sylvie Humbert-Mougin, *Dionysos revisité: Les tragiques grecs en France de Leconte de Lisle à Claudel* (Paris: Éditions Belin, 2003), 184.

> *Classical Repertoire*. We consider this to be an important point in our mission, and this repertoire will be the object of all our attention. …We will make, if we can express ourselves this way, a sort of permanent theatrical exhibition.[132]

Towards this museum-making goal, the Odéon produced works by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides (the last adapted by Leconte de Lisle). Given the increasing public interest in Greek drama, it is little wonder that the Opéra-Comique might seek to capitalize on the popularity of productions like those at the Odéon and the Comédie-Française's *Antigone* by giving Greek mythology a prominent place in the developing Operatic Museum.

These factors help explain why Greek mythological subject matter was well received by opera audiences at the *fin de siècle*. But the importance of the Orpheus myth went far beyond a general interest in antiquity; the legend of the poet/composer was laden with significance for Symbolist artists, and thus appeared frequently in their works. Gustave Moreau's *Young Thracian Woman Carrying the Head of Orpheus* (1865) and *Orpheus at the Tomb of Eurydice* (1890–1891; see Fig. 3.4) are perhaps the most prominent examples, but other significant representations of the myth in painting would include Louis Français's *Orpheus* (1863), Émily Lévy's *Death of Orpheus* (1866), Jean Delville's two *Orpheus* paintings (1893, 1896), and Alexander Séon's *Lamentations of Orpheus* (1896), among numerous other examples.[133] In literature, Paul Valéry's sonnet "Orphée" (1891–1892) stands as a prominent example of the myth's resonance with symbolist thought, and Orpheus and Orphic thought were prominent in the works and

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[132] Declaration from André Antoine and Paul Ginistry, co-directors of the Odéon. Archives nationales. "*Répertoire classique.* Nous considérons que c'est là un point important de notre mission, et ce répertoire sera l'objet de tous nos soins. …[N]ous ferons, si nous pouvons nous exprimer ainsi, une sorte d'exposition permanente du théâtre." Quoted in Humbert-Mougin, *Dionysos revisité,* 188–89.

[133] For a thorough look at the Orpheus myth in symbolist art, see Dorothy M. Kosinski, *Orpheus in Nineteenth-Century Symbolism* (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, 1989).

ideology of Stéphane Mallarmé.[134] Although the myth appears in earlier nineteenth-century Parnassian works, as Kushner points out, it came to its full potential in Symbolist art.[135] Art historian Dorothy Kosinski provides some explanation: "For the Symbolists, Orpheus has a very specific meaning: he is priest, initiate, martyr, ideal artist whose work magically summons aspects of the Symbolist aesthetic—art as religion, the artist as priest, the art object as revelation."[136] This symbolist aesthetic outlook was shaped to a large extent by Wagner's writings, and so, not surprisingly, music took a place of honor among the arts for its ability to communicate abstractly, without the limitations of language.[137]

Music essentially became an ideal synthesis of all the arts, and Orpheus stood as the mythic personification of this goal, which Kosinski refers to as the "synaesthetic ideal." He represents the essence of the poet and musician, as well as being a saint and martyr in the Symbolist religion of art. From another perspective, one might point to the similarities between the figure of Orpheus and Wagner's ideal of the perfect musician; both demonstrate the possibilities of the poet/composer, and both exemplify the

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[134] On the importance of Orphic thought to Mallarmé, see Walter A. Strauss, *Descent and Return: The Orphic Theme in Modern Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), Chapter 4. See also Robert McGahey, *The Orphic Moment: Shaman to Poet-Thinker in Plato, Nietzsche, and Mallarmé* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

[135] Kushner, *Le Mythe d'Orphée*, 95–96.

[136] Kosinski, *Orpheus in Nineteenth-Century Symbolism*, 49.

[137] Certainly, not all symbolists agreed with Wagner that music stood at the pinnacle of the arts. René Ghil, for example, argued strongly that poetry was the true synthesis of the arts. In the symbolist discourse, as Joseph Acquisto points out, "What begins as a sort of competition among the arts for pride of place, a conflict incited by Wagner's published claims about poetry's eventual disappearance and replacement by music, eventually becomes a site of aporia, a space for critical discourse about poetry and the limits which both poetry and the critical metadiscourse can or should transcend." Joseph Acquisto, *French Symbolist Poetry and the Idea of Music* (Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 4. This book provides an insightful look at the role of Wagner's writings in the development of symbolist thought. For a different perspective on the subject, see Louis Marvick, *Waking the Face That No One Is: A Study in the Musical Context of Symbolist Poetics* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004).

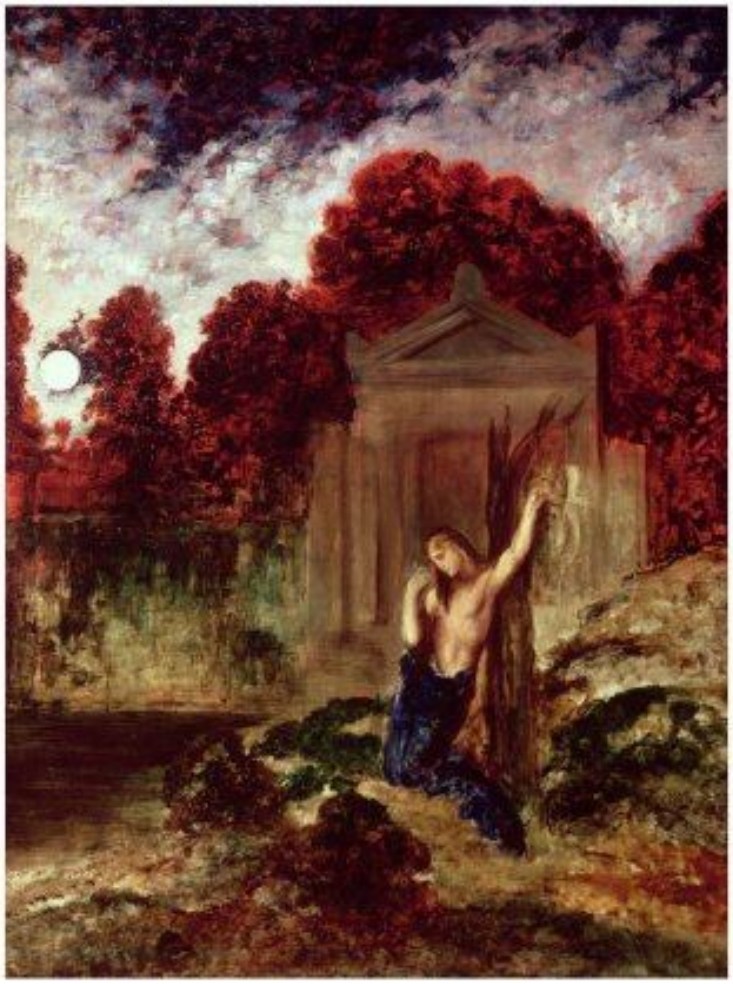

**Fig. 3.4: Gustave Moreau, *Orpheus at the Tomb of Eurydice* (1890–1891). Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.**

emotional powers of music.[138] The connection between Wagner and Orpheus was not lost on *fin-de-siècle* artists; Gustave Moreau's *Orpheus* (ca. 1887), for example, depicts the lamenting Orpheus standing over the body of Eurydice, with a dead swan lying next to

[138] Albert Lavignac, for example, ascribed enormous power to Wagner's music in 1898: "We look at the sun and watch it in its course, but we never think of congratulating it in its power, nor of thinking that its glory would in any way be augmented by the addition of our mite of personal appreciation." Albert Lavignac, *The Music Dramas of Richard Wagner and His Festival Theatre in Bayreuth*, trans. Esther Singleton (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1914), 69.

her body–an apparent reference to Wagner's opera *Lohengrin* (1850), in which the swan is a recurring image of purity and/or loss.[139]

Given Orpheus's status as the embodiment of musical perfection, it seems astonishing that no *fin-de-siècle* composers—even those that might be described as "Symbolist"—treated the material. After all, such a step seems logical; Edouard Schuré, for example, opined in 1886 that the "myth of Orpheus can find its dramatic and poignant form only through the plenitude of musical expression."[140] At the turn of the century, however, Gluck essentially had sole ownership of the Orpheus myth in music. *Orphée* was simply too well known and too highly respected; the "anxiety of influence" created by the opera may have been too great for composers to risk challenging Gluck's authority.[141] Tiersot certainly perceived this to be the case in 1896:

> From the nineteenth century onwards, the name of Gluck is so completely associated with the idea of Orpheus that no musician would dare to touch this legend, on the subject of which it seems that, from then on, everything has already been said.[142]

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[139] Kosinski points out this Wagnerian connection, as well. Furthermore, she observes that the type of "psychological landscape" depicted in this painting was understood at the time as being inherently Wagnerian, a fact noted by, among other critics, Edouard Schuré and Téodor de Wyzewa. Kosknski, *Orpheus in Nineteenth-Century Symbolism*, 121, and Chapter 5.

[140] Edouard Schuré, *Le Drame musical*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Librairie Académique Didier, 1886), 268. The historical importance of the Orpheus myth in music is addressed from a number of perspectives in *Musiques d'Orphée*, ed. Danièle Pistone and Pierre Brunel (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999). A list of significant musical works on the subject from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries may be found on pages 185–90.

[141] Offenbach's celebrated *Orphée aux Enfers* (1858), of course, stands as an exception, but that opera's farcical treatment of the material sets it apart from Gluck's work. Debussy's efforts to compose a serious opera on the subject, *Orphée-roi*, ended with not a single note on paper, after two years of work on the libretto with colleague Victor Segalen. For more on Debussy's work, see Rollo Myers, "The Opera that Never Was: Debussy's Collaboration with Victor Segalen in the Preparation of *Orphée*," *Musical Quarterly* 64 (1978): 495–506.

[142] *Le Ménestrel*, 30 August 1896. "A partir du XIXe siècle, le nom de Gluck est si complètement associé à l'idée d'Orphée qu'aucun musicien n'oserait plus toucher à cette légende, au sujet de laquelle il semble que, désormais, tout soit dit."

Given that Gluck's treatment of the myth was the most prominent musical version known to Parisian audiences (and that composers were unwilling to attempt a new operatic version), *Orphée et Eurydice* presented the only reasonable solution to music theaters looking to exploit the popularity of the Orpheus legend.[143] Gluck's opera had the potential to be particularly relevant to modern audiences, as Raymond Bouyer pointed out in the literary journal *L'Artiste*:

> In the gloomy depths of the sacred protective Wood, does he himself not point out the path for us, the distraught white Poet who brandishes his lyre, confiding in his harmonious despair that he will create the song for regaining love? The eternal myth speaks in his gesture. Let us identify our soul with his, walk with him, live in him, in order to decorate the internal museum of our fugitive memories: his sorrowful beauty reveals us to ourselves; that he should be in our hopes, that he should return amid our regrets so as to beautify them in his image, with the rebirth of the first leaves.[144]

In order for Gluck's opera to be perceived in a modern fashion, it was crucial to align the work with the Symbolist interpretation of the myth, essentially creating a live version of the Symbolist works on the stage. The two primary ways in which this process was enacted—in terms of both the production and its critical reception—was through employing the Symbolist tropes of Orpheus's gender ambiguity and through a focus on the role of lamentation in *Orphée*.

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[143] Monteverdi's *Orfeo* was certainly known to musicologists at this time (many of them wrote of the work in opera histories), but was undoubtedly considered to be unperformable in modern times. In 1904 it was performed in a concert version at the Schola Cantorum, but on stage Gluck's version remained essentially unchallenged.

[144] *L'Artiste*, March 1896, p. 215. "Dans les profondeurs funèbres du Bois sacré tutélaire, ne nous indique-t-il pas lui-même le sentier, le blanc Poète éperdu qui brandit sa Lyre, confiant dans son désespoir harmonieux qui va créer le chant pour reconquérir l'amour ? Le mythe éternel parle en son geste. Identifions notre âme à la sienne, marchons avec lui, vivons en lui, pour orner le musée intérieur de nos fugitifs souvenirs : sa beauté douloureuse nous relève à nous-mêmes ; qu'il soit dans nos espérances, qu'il revienne parmi nos regrets pour les embellir à son image, avec la renaissance des premières feuillées."

A critical point in the Symbolist Orpheus works was the depiction of him as a profoundly androgynous figure. As the allegorical manifestation of the symbolist (or Wagnerian) high priest of art, Orpheus transcends the limitations of specifically masculine or feminine beauty. Art historian Patricia Matthews has pointed out that for Symbolist artists, androgyny—in males:

> became a sign of creative force…incorporating the female principle without the taint of sexuality. … [It] asserted the notion of the feminine as creative while maintaining the exclusion of actual women from the ideology of creativity.[145]

The works of Alexandre Séon and Jean Delville (see. Figs. 3.5 and 3.6), depict the poet/musician with a kind of ideal non-gendered beauty, and prominently feature the lyre—the tool of artistic creation—as being almost an extension of the hero's body. Nineteenth-century performances of Gluck's *Orphée* contribute to the sense of androgyny by featuring a female mezzo-soprano in the role of the mythological hero.[146] In fact, the opera's 1859 revival may have been a catalyzing factor in the androgynous portrayal of Orpheus in art, as Viardot's performance was patently the inspiration for François Louis Français's painting *Orpheus* (1863) in addition to works by other artists from the same

[145] Patricia Mathews, *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender, and French Symbolist Art* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 113.

[146] Gluck's original Italian version of the opera (1762) called for a castrato contralto. In the French version (1774), the part was rewritten for a tenor voice. In Berlioz's 1859 version, which was used (with minor alterations) in the 1896 production, the role was restored to the contralto/mezzo-soprano range, but the part was sung by a female singer.

**Fig 3.5: Alexandre Séon, *Lamentation of Orpheus* (1896). Musée d'Orsay, Paris.**

**Fig. 3.6: Jean Delville, *Orpheus* (1893). Collection Anne-Marie Gillion Crowet, Brussels.**

period.[147] Thus, the 1896 *Orphée* may be seen as part of a circular progression; Gluck's opera influenced visual artists, which in turn may have helped bring about the opera's return to popularity decades later. Whatever its origins, this androgyny may also be interpreted in a Wagnerian fashion. Jean-Jacques Nattiez has explored in depth the concept that Wagner's music and writings are saturated with the idea of combining male and female elements. As Nattiez points out, Wagner frequently turned in his writings to the analogy of the female Music being impregnated by the male Poetry, producing the fusion as an offspring. Furthermore:

> as the poet of the future, Wagner himself is an androgynous being, bearing within him the active male principle, in the form of the poetic seed, and the passive female principle, embodied in music. And the work that results from this inner impregnation is itself an androgynous creation, since Wagner's musical drama bestows its blessing on the union of male poetry and female music.[148]

Orpheus, as Wagnerian composer/poet, represents such an offspring; an androgynous Orphée had the potential to become a figurehead for the ideal Wagnerian artist, imbued with the masculine and feminine elements necessary for greatness.

Orphée was not the only gender-ambiguous character on the *fin-de-siècle* operatic stage, however, and featuring a soprano *en travesti* as a major character in opera was certainly not unique to Gluck. French audiences were accustomed to such devices, the character of Nicklausse in Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (1881) being just one

[147] Kosinski, *Orpheus in Nineteenth-Century Symbolism*, 153. The connection between Gluck's opera and these paintings is expressed in Paul Mantz, "Salon de 1863," *Gazette des beaux-arts* 4 (1863), 40.

[148] Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, trans. Stewart Spencer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 40.

prominent example.[149] Despite precedents, however, one must agree with literary theorist Wendy Bashant when she points out that the Berlioz version of *Orphée* "is one of the queerest operas I know," plagued by "gendered complexity" and "the ambiguity created by voices that refuse to rest on their prescribed staffs."[150]

Females *en travesti* might have been fairly common at the *fin de siècle*, but most often in secondary roles and/or as male youths. A heroic protagonist like Orpheus sung by a woman was far from typical, and the character's inherent androgyny would certainly have been noticed by audiences. The musicologist and critic Henri de Curzon noted in his review that "the most bizarre" thing in the production was "Orphée's feminine costume: without his lyre, he was indistinguishable from Eurydice. It seems that this is still another new idea of performance… alas!"[151] Curzon's observation seems to be on the mark. In contrast to the fairly masculine costume worn by Pauline Viardot in 1859, the 1896 production evidently saw Marie Delna in more ambiguous clothing: a lose fitting white robe much like what one would expect female characters to wear (see fig. 3.7). Furthermore, one may interpret the *de facto* same-sex relationship between Orpheus and Eurydice as appealing to the same turn-of-the-century fascination with lesbian

[149] For an examination of the development and continuation of the *travesti* character in nineteenth-century opera, see Naomi André, *Voicing Gender: Castrati, Travesti, and the Second Woman in Early-Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006). On the character of Nicklausse in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann,* see Heather Hadlock, "The Career of Cherubino, or the Trouser Role Grows Up," in *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera*, ed. Mary Ann Smart (Princeton and Oxford : Princeton University Press, 2000), 74. Hadlock also points to the gender issues inherent in the soprano title character in Massenet's *Chérubin* (1905), which provides another example of the *fin-de-siècle* French trouser role.

[150] Wendy Bashant, "Singing in Greek Drag: Gluck, Berlioz, George Eliot," in *En Travesti: Women, Gender Subversion, Opera*, ed. Corinne E. Balckmer and Patricia Juliana Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 216, 221.

[151] *La Gazette de France*, 8 March 1896. "le plus bizarre [chose], c'est le costume feminine d'Orphée: sans sa lyre, on ne le distinguerait pas d'Eurydice. Il paraît que c'est encore une idée nouvelle de l'interprète…hélas!"

behavior—and in particular "Greek" lesbian behavior—evident in works like Pierre Louÿs's extremely successful novel *Aphrodite* (1896) and his poetic cycle *Les Chansons*


**Fig. 3.7: Marie Delna as *Orphée,* ca. 1896. *Musica,* April 1908.**

*de Bilitis* (1894).[152] Historian Lenard Berlanstein has also pointed out that "the fictions of the stage provided a cover for erotic pleasures that would otherwise have been suspect. Transvestite performance allowed audiences to enjoy the sight of attractive women embracing or exchanging longing glances."[153] Thus, *Orphée* would have allowed

[152] On the widespread depictions of lesbianism in the French arts during this time, see Dorothy M. Kosinski, "Gustave Courbet's *The Sleepers*. The Lesbian Image in Nineteenth-Century French Art and Literature," *Artibus et historiae* 9 (1988): 187–199. Kosinski points out that often mythological themes (or allusion to them) were a common way of providing a veneer of "respectability" to depictions of lesbian behavior, avoid the criticism that these works appealed to prurient interests. For a musicological perspective on these issues, see also Hadlock, "The Career of Cherubino," 75–76.

audiences to appreciate the production's lesbian overtones, while maintaining a "Greek" aspect to the work.

Significantly, only at the conservative Schola Cantorum was the character of Orpheus sung by a tenor rather than a mezzo-soprano, in a move that some may well have seen as rescuing the opera from the decadent implications of its casting. From d'Indy's *Cours de composition musicale*, it is clear that he found the tradition of having the role performed by a woman to be extremely distasteful:

> The French Orphée, like the Italian one, was written for a tenor voice, and the alteration of this role for a contralto, adopted for so long at the Opéra-Comique under the pretext that the effort demanded was too great for a tenor, changes both the character and the tone very unfavorably. In Italy, they very much cultivated a high-pitched tenor voice, to the point where they borrow, so to speak, a register more within the grasp of women's voices; but these high notes are very fierce, and replacing them with a feminine medium is a sweetening equivalent to murder.[154]

Although this passage leans on Gluck's original intentions for support, this explanation for d'Indy's antipathy towards casting a woman as Orphée falls flat. For one thing, d'Indy is either simply wrong about the original Italian version being written for a tenor (it was written for an alto castrato) or he is deliberately misleading his readers in order to lend his aesthetic judgment an air of historical authenticity. Such a call for "authenticity"

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[153] Lenard A. Berlenstein, "Breeches and Breaches: Cross-Dress Theater and the Culture of Gender Ambiguity in Modern France," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38 (1996), 339.

[154] Vincent d'Indy, *Cours de composition musicale*, Vol. 3, ed. Guy de Lioncourt (Paris: Durand, 1950), 62. "L'Orphée français, comme l'italien, était écrit pour une voix de ténor, et la transformation de ce rôle en contralto, adoptée longtemps à l'Opéra-Comique sous le prétexte que l'effort demandé au ténor était trop grand, en change très défavorablement le caractère et l'accent. En Italie, on cultivait beaucoup à l'aigu les voix de ténor, jusqu'à leur faire pour ainsi dire emprunter un registre mieux à la portée des voix des femmes ; mais ces notes aiguës étaient très violentes, et leur remplacement par un medium féminin est une édulcoration qui équivaut à un assassinat." While this passage was not published until the mid twentieth century (compiled from Lioncourt's notes from the Schola Cantorum), it presumably reflects d'Indy's earlier views as well. In the April 1909 *Tablettes de la Schola*, d'Indy wrote notes to a concert that featured excerpts from *Orphée*, d'Indy expressed similar annoyance with the notion of a female Orphée. See Vincent d'Indy, *Ma vie*, 703–704.

is particularly ironic when one considers the extensive alterations that d'Indy was willing to make to Rameau's music, for example, in order to make it sound more "progressive" (see Chapter 4). Instead, the composer's uneasiness with the Opéra-Comique's performance seems to run deeper. For d'Indy, a female Orphée was not so much androgynous as emasculated, which was for him an unacceptable situation; only with a male voice could the character's heroic qualities be represented appropriately. D'Indy's example calls attention to the fact that at least some audience members did, in fact, notice that casting Orphée as a woman had a profound effect on the opera, not just in terms of the sound, but also in terms of "the character" of Orphée.[155]

Related to Orphée's gender ambiguity was another aspect of the opera shared with Symbolist thought: the work's focus on suffering and lamentation. *Orphée* begins, unlike many other works on the subject, after the death of Eurydice. Never is the audience treated to a glimpse of a happily wed Orpheus; instead, Gluck's opera focuses from the beginning on the idea of the hero's suffering and lamentation. To some extent, this lamentation may be read as a function of Orpheus's gender confusion. As classicist Charles Segal points out:

> A singer who makes his poetry of his passion and his passion of his poetry, Orpheus transforms grief into song. This is a song whose primary character is its intense, person expressiveness rather than its ritual character as consolation for sorrow. In Greek culture particularly, the ritual lament is the special prerogative of women…. Orpheus, however,

[155] In seeking a definitely masculine version of Orpheus, d'Indy might also have sought to eliminate the lingering aspects of queer identity that have been associated with Orpheus since Ovid, including homosexuality and pederasty. According to the *Metamorphoses*, after the death of Eurydice Orpheus rejected the company of women, preferring instead the sexual company of the men and young boys of Thrace. For a discussion of this aspect of Orpheus's character, see John F. Makowski, "Bisexual Orpheus: Pederasty and Parody in Ovid," *Classical Journal* 92 (1996): 25–38. Recently Judith Peraino has explored Orpheus's queer identity in more musicological terms in *Listening to the Sirens: Musical Technologies of Queer Identity from Homer to* Hedwig (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 24–26.

> claims this lamentation for the male voice. His is a voice of total mourning and perpetual lament.[156]

In Gluck's opera, the idea that Orpheus exhibits typically female lamentation in the "male voice" is turned on its head; he may be a male character, but the voice is most certainly female.

A focus on Orpheus's lamentations is evident from the critical response to the 1896 production of *Orphée*. The critic E. de Trémon found even the orchestral music to reflect this quality, writing that at the performance "One was overwhelmed, in listening to these symphonic lamentations, by the intensity of insight from these notes, wherein the rending of the superhuman soul is combined with earthly thought."[157] The opening scene at Eurydice's tomb and, most particularly, the lamentation of "J'ai perdu mon Eurydice" were the focus of the majority of the reviews, whereas the opera's happy ending was largely ignored, or glossed over. The text of the opera's first scene reflects the sense of overwhelming tragedy favored by the Symbolists in their interpretation of the Orpheus myth:[158]

| | |
|---|---|
| CHŒUR | CHOIR |
| Ah! dans ce bois tranquille et sombre, | Ah! in this tranquil and somber wood |
| Eurydice, si ton ombre | Eurydice, if your shade |
| Nous entend, ... | hears us, … |

[156] Charles Segal, *Orpheus: The Myth of the Poet* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 164. For one look at the lament as peculiarly feminine in opera, see Leofranc Holford-Strevens, "'Her Eyes Became Two Spouts': Classical Antecedents of Renaissance Laments," *Early Music* 27 (1999): 379–93.

[157] *L'Orchestre*, 17 March 1896. "On est envahi, en écoutant ces lamentations symphoniques, par l'intensité de pénétration de ces accents où les déchirements de l'âme surhumaine s'allient à la pensée terrestre."

[158] While Orpheus's lamenting was a trope of Romanticism as well, the importance of his suffering was magnified at the *fin de siècle.* As Kosinski points out, "For the Symbolists…the contorted, solitary figure of Orpheus is the embodiment of spiritual torment, an expression of [their] own personal emotional or aesthetic struggles." Kosinski, *Orpheus in Nineteenth-Century Symbolism*, 152.

| | |
|---|---|
| ORPHÉE<br>Eurydice! | ORPHÉE<br>Eurydice! |
| CHŒUR<br>... Sois sensible à nos alarmes,<br>Vois nos peines, vois nos larmes<br>Que pour toi l'on répand. | CHOIR<br>…be aware of our alarms,<br>see our suffering, see our tears<br>that we shed for you. |
| ORPHÉE<br>Eurydice! | ORPHÉE<br>Eurydice! |
| CHŒUR<br>Ah! prends pitié du malheureux Orphée,<br>Il soupire, il gémit,<br>Il plaint sa destinée. | CHOIR<br>Ah ! take pity on the unfortunate Orphée,<br>he sighs, he moans,<br>he laments his destiny. |
| ORPHÉE<br>Eurydice! | ORPHÉE<br>Eurydice! |
| CHŒUR<br>L'amoureuse tourterelle,<br>Toujours tendre, toujours fidèle,<br>Ainsi soupire et meurt<br>De douleur.[159] | CHOIR<br>The turtledove in love,<br>always tender, always true,<br>sighs and dies like this<br>of grief. |

Critics likewise picked up on the hero's overwhelming pathos. In the review of the 1896 production found in *Le Guide musical*, for example, the description of this scene is as follows: "From the raising of the curtain we were admiring the tableau worthy of Poussin depicting Orphée prostrate before the tomb of Eurydice, responding to the beautiful lamentations of the choir with his harrowing cry of 'Eurydice'…"[160] Bruneau uses equally exalted language to describe the same scene: "The slow lamentation of the people

[159] This French text is taken from the Stanford University online libretto collection, available at http://opera.stanford.edu/iu/libretti/orphee.html.

[160] *Le Guide musical*, 8 March 1896. "Lorsqu'au lever du rideau, nous admirions ce tableau digne du Poussin, représentant Orphée prosterné devant le tombeau d'Eurydice, répondant par ce cri douloureux "Eurydice" aux belles lamentations du chœur…."

before the tomb of Eurydice, the three heart-rending cries of Orphée that loom above it, the funereal pantomime that follows it are of a superb solemnity."[161]

Similarly, regarding Orphée's lament "J'ai perdu mon Eurydice," one of the most enduringly popular excerpts from the opera, the critic for the *Journal des débats* wrote:

> What prodigious emotion comes from this cry of love: *J'ai perdu mon Eurydice* [I have lost my Eurydice]! And would you think to find a single person who is truly sensitive to the charms of music who would be able to remain unmoved in the face of this explosion of despair, even after all the dramatic changes made in music by Beethoven, Berlioz, or Wagner?[162]

This passage reveals again the critical emphasis on the suffering of the main character; the eventual cessation of that suffering (in Gluck's opera, if not the myth) is almost beside the point. Instead, it is the overwhelming loss that Orphée endures, combined with the lengths to which he goes to defy the gods, that captures the *fin-de-siècle* attention. Emphasizing the lamentations of Orpheus also, as we have seen, allowed audiences to express the national sense of mourning in France during this time, a focus that carried over into productions of Gluck's other operas.

However well Gluck's opera played into modern conceptions of the Orpheus myth, I do not mean to suggest that the sole impetus for the revival of *Orphée* at the Opéra-Comique was a desire to exploit Symbolist aesthetic ideals. Carvalho was doubtless attempting to recreate his 1859 success by remounting the opera in a similar fashion. Furthermore, as we saw earlier in this chapter, the Opéra-Comique was likely

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[161] *Le Figaro*, 7 March 1896. "La lente lamentation du peuple devant le tombeau d'Eurydice, les trois cris déchirants d'Orphée qui la dominent, la pantomime funèbre qui la suit sont d'une solennité superbe."

[162] *Le Journal des débats*, 15 March 1896. "Quelle prodigieuse émotion sa dégage de ce cri d'amour: *J'ai perdu mon Eurydice !* Et penseriez-vous trouver un seul homme véritablement sensible au charme de la musique qui pût rester froid devant cette explosion de désespoir, même après tous les bouleversements opérés dans l'art musical par Beethoven, Berlioz, ou Wagner?"

attempting to find works that could compete with the Opéra's virtual monopoly on Wagner's music dramas. Nevertheless, the idea that *fin-de-siècle* audiences might interpret *Orphée* in new ways was not lost on critics. Bouyer, for example, found that a useful way to approach the 1896 production would be to examine

> the three different aspects concealed within the same work according the various times [of its performance], to compare with sympathy the three *Orphée*s and the three Glucks in how they appeared to Parisian listeners in 1774, in 1859, and in 1896: the mirror is the measure of all things, and the immortal image is deformed through its reflection. Each age has its pleasures—and its point of view. Would the philosopher not add that there are perhaps as many *Orphée*s as there are listeners?... Which leaves nothing but to be worried.[163]

This remarkably modern perspective allowed the work itself to be unchanging and eternal (the "immortal image"), while the audience members would impose differing interpretations based on the vantage point provided by their particular time and place. Bouyer also suggests here that the 1896 *Orphée* was necessarily a reflection of the culture that created it, which was one deeply permeated by Wagnerian and Symbolist rhetoric.

Certainly *Orphée* is not an inherently Symbolist work in the manner of, for example, Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902). Rather, Gluck's opera may have been seen from a Symbolist perspective, particularly for those who sought to tie the work to post-Wagnerian aesthetic sensibilities. *Orphée,* in other words, was a work that lent itself easily to the prevailing artistic image of Orpheus, but did not necessarily require audiences to hold that image. This flexibility allowed not only operatic traditionalists to

[163] *L'Artiste*, March 1896, p. 198. "les trois aspects différents revêtus par un même ouvrage selon des époques diverses, de confronter avec sympathie les trois *Orphées* et les trois Gluck tels qu'ils apparurent successivement aux auditeurs parisiens de 1774, de 1859 et de 1896 : le miroir est la mesure de toutes choses, et l'image immortelle se déforme en s'y réfléchissant. Chaque âge a ses plaisirs – et son point de vue. Le philosophe n'ajouterait-il pas qu'il y a peut-être autant d'*Orphées* que d'auditeurs ?... Ce qui ne laisse pas que d'être inquiétant. "

appreciate that an eighteenth-century work was being revived, but also encouraged audiences who were primarily interested in newer works to see the work in a more modern light.

***

Whatever the exact reasons, the 1896 revival of *Orphée* was by all accounts successful. Carvalho's gambit at the Opéra-Comique paid off, and he was able to replicate the success of his 1859 production. In a serialized history of Gluck's work, Tiersot wrote in *Le Ménestrel* that:

> Finally, in the same year that these lines are being written, a new production of [*Orphée*] has taken place, also under the direction of M. Carvalho, at the Opéra-Comique, conforming to the traditions previously established at the Théâtre-Lyrique [in 1859]. Its success has not been less complete this time, and without doubt is still not exhausted.
>
> This sustained public admiration is, certainly, the most beautiful homage that has been given to Gluck's genius and to the principles of his art. And this homage is made all the more significant by the fact that it is unique, *Orphée* being the sole work of dramatic music from this period to which such a fortune is due.[164]

At least for Tiersot, *Orphée* held a special place in the operatic canon as the only work from its "period" ["époque"] that possessed a sustained artistic following in the late nineteenth century. Several critics pointed to the fact that the opera may not have been Gluck's best, but that it was enough of a masterpiece to stand the test of time. Paul Rameau wrote in *Le Temps*, for example, that "*Orphée* is neither *Alceste* nor *Iphigénie en*

[164] *Le Ménestrel*, 4 October 1896. "Enfin, dans l'année même où ces lignes sont écrites, une nouvelle reprise de l'œuvre a eu lieu, également sous la direction de M. Carvalho, à l'Opéra-Comique, conformément aux traditions précédemment établies au Théâtre-Lyrique. Le succès n'en a pas été moins complet, et sans doute n'est pas encore épuisé.

Cette continuité de l'admiration publique est, certes, le plus bel hommage qui ait été rendu au génie de Gluck et aux principes de son art. Et cet hommage est d'autant plus significatif que, par le fait, il est unique, *Orphée* étant la seule œuvre de musique dramatique de cette époque à qui soit échue une telle fortune."

*Tauride*. But, without being Gluck's masterpiece, it is still a masterpiece nonetheless…."

Rameau continued:

> Give a glass of water to a man dying of thirst: would that man dream of asking you first if you have…adorned your vessel with a perfected filter? No, the unfortunate man to whom you have given life would not make too much difficulty. He will thank you, even if you do not deserve it at all, even if your help is late or incomplete; and he will drink eagerly.[165]

In this analogy, Paris is dying for lack of the operatic classics that it needs for nourishment, and in the absence of better choices, *Orphée* would do. Audiences could wait no longer for the Operatic Museum to open its doors.

By viewing the work in the context of Symbolism, the most prominent aesthetic ideology of the *fin de siècle,* critics and audiences could connect the glories of France's past to the achievements of its present, creating a lineage of French masterpieces stretching back more than a century. Given the success of this juxtaposition of the ancient and the modern—a clear demonstration of the important educational and cultural roles the Operatic Museum was beginning to play—some critics dared to hope that the 1896 production might be the harbinger of a full-scale revival of Gluck's operas. Paul Dukas, writing in the *Revue hebdomadaire,* expressed such a sentiment in strong language:

> How many times have we predicted the triumph of these sublime creations if they were to be performed, and on how many occasions have we insisted on the opportunity to return to our theaters the most authentic masterworks they can pride themselves on! Gluck has triumphed this time just as he will always triumph, by his force alone and without the help of prior publicity. Is it permitted to hope that we will not stop on this excellent path, and that after the production of *Orphée* at the Opéra-

[165] *Le Temps*, 15 March 1896. "*Orphée*, ce n'est pourtant ni *Alceste*, ni *Iphigénie en Tauride*. Mais sans être le chef-d'œuvre de Gluck, c'est déjà un chef-d'œuvre….Donnez un verre d'eau à l'homme qui meurt de soif : cet homme songera-t-il à vous demander si vous avez d'abord…orné votre réservoir d'un filtre perfectionné ? Non, le malheureux à qui vous rendes la vie ne fera pas trop le difficile. Il vous remerciera, même si vous ne le méritez guère, même si votre recours est tardif ou incomplet ; et il boira, avidement."

> Comique, we are right to expect the Opéra to present us with *Alceste*, *Armide*, or one of the two *Iphigénies*?[166]

Others had hoped for a similar revival before and had been disappointed. This time, however, *Orphée* opened a door through which Gluck's remaining operas could enter the Parisian music scene. As Gluck's works continued to be successfully revived and became mainstays of the repertoire of the Opéra-Comique (and to a lesser extent, the Opéra), critics, audiences, and theater directors began to explore the possibility of resurrecting other eighteenth-century figures, most importantly Rameau. The success of Gluck at the Opéra-Comique proved that an Operatic Museum could be both financially beneficial for the theaters and a means to preserve France's operatic heritage. It undoubtedly encouraged the theaters to expand their historical horizons and to attempt bringing luminaries from music history back onto the stages of Paris.

[166] *Revue hebdomadaire*, March 1896. Reprinted in Paul Dukas, *Les Écrits de Paul Dukas sur la musique* (Paris: Société d'éditions françaises et internationales, 1948), 295-96. "Combien de fois n'avions-nous pas prédit le triomphe de ces sublimes créations le jour où elles nous seraient rendues, et en combien d'occasions n'avons-nous pas insisté sur l'opportunité de remettre au répertoire au répertoire de nos théâtres les chefs-d'œuvre les plus authentiques dont ils puissent s'enorgueillir ! Gluck a vaincu cette fois comme il vaincra toujours pas sa seule force et sans le secours de réclames préalables. Est-il permis d'espérer qu'on ne s'arrêtera pas en si beau chemin, et qu'après la représentation d'*Orphée* à l'Opéra-Comique, nous sommes en droit d'attendre de l'Opéra qu'il nous donne *Alceste, Armide* ou l'une des deux *Iphigénie* ?"

## CHAPTER 4

## RAMEAU

Jean-Philippe Rameau occupied a unique position in the pantheon of Classical musicians during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. While the composer was the object of near unified praise, very little of his music was known to audiences or even available for study in reasonable editions. Rameau was nonetheless perceived to be one of the most significant figures in French music history—perhaps *the* most significant, according to the musicologist and critic Adolphe Jullien, who wrote in 1884 that:

> By a law of nature that is not in our power to alter, France has produced only a very small number of great musicians, by which I mean those superior geniuses who are like the gods of music: almost all have seen the light of day in Italy or, above all, in Germany. We can pride ourselves for having as compatriots musicians of high quality, who have played a major role in the history of French music: Campra, Destouches, Monsigny, Philidor, Berton, Boïeldieu, Nicolo, Hérold, etc.; but I see none but Rameau, and perhaps Méhul and Berlioz, who can be placed among the leading figures of musical art.[1]

For Jullien, Rameau was the only French composer (with the possible exception of Méhul and Berlioz) who could be counted among the greatest composers—that is, among Bach,

[1] Adolphe Jullien, *Paris dilettante au commencement du siècle* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1884), 372. "Par une loi de nature, qu'il n'est pas en notre pouvoir de modifier, la France n'a vu naître qu'un nombre très restreint de grands musiciens, j'entends de ces génies supérieurs qui sont comme les dieux de la musique : presque tous out vu le jour en Italie et surtout en Allemagne. Nous pouvons bien nous honorer d'avoir pour compatriotes des musiciens de haute valeur, et qui ont joué un beau rôle dans l'histoire de la musique française : Campra, Destouches, Monsigny, Philidor, Berton, Boïeldieu, Nicolo, Hérold, etc. ; mais je ne vois guère que Rameau, et peut-être Méhul et Berlioz, qui puissent être rangés parmi les sommités de l'art musical."

Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and so on. Similar opinions, though seldom expressed quite so polemically, were commonly repeated in French narratives of music history. For example, in his 1877 *Histoire de la musique*, Henri Lavoix similarly situated Rameau among German musical luminaries:

> Organist, harpsichordist, theorist, and dramatic composer, Rameau was the greatest French musician of the eighteenth century, covering with his name, like a triumphal banner, the period extending from Lully to Gluck.
>
> It was he who gave color and depth to harmony, who developed the expressive powers of the orchestra, who created the overture, which had before him been only a sort of more-or-less agreeable murmur. With Bach and Handel, Rameau completes the great musical trinity of the first half of the eighteenth century, and we can say that Gluck could not avoid succumbing to the strong and beneficial influence of the Burgundian master.[2]

Here Lavoix not only situates Rameau with Bach and Handel—no small praise, particularly as both composers were enjoying a renewed popularity in France during this time—but also suggests that Gluck was influenced by Rameau's operas.[3] This claim is significant; as we have seen in Chapter 3, Gluck was widely perceived to be the creator of the modern musical drama, a lineage culminating in Wagner. The nationalist goals of Lavoix's text, written only seven years after the end of the Franco-Prussian War, are clear: by suggesting that Rameau was a major influence on that historical trajectory, Lavoix insinuates that modern operatic styles were distinctly French in origin.

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[2] Henri Lavoix, *Histoire de la musique* (Paris: Quantin, 1877), 226. "Organiste, claveciniste, théoricien, compositeur dramatique, Rameau fut le plus grand musicien français du XVIIIe siècle, couvrant de son nom, comme d'un pavillon triomphant, la période qui s'étend de Lulli à Gluck.

Ce fut lui donna à l'harmonie la couleur et la profondeur, développa les forces expressives de l'orchestre, créa l'ouverture, qui n'était avant lui qu'une sorte de murmure plus ou moins agréable. Avec Bach et Haendel, Rameau complète la grande trinité musicale de la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle, et nous pouvons dire que Gluck ne fut pas sans subir la forte et salutaire influence du maître bourguignon."

[3] Katharine Ellis examines in depth the reception of Bach and Handel in *Interpreting the Musical Past: Early Music in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

In his 1908 biography of the composer, the ardent Ramiste Louis Laloy was even willing to place Rameau on a pedestal above all others great masters, German and French alike:

> Rameau's dances and descriptive pieces shine with unchanged splendor. Time, which kills so many glories, seems to have even added to their beauty, erasing what contemporaries saw as brash, making it clearer and more harmonious. Of all his compositions, none have aged, while Beethoven, Schubert, Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner, and César Franck show us so many outdated pages or phrases. Nothing loses its freshness as quickly lyric effusions, be it the most touching in the world, because nothing changes faster than our manner of living. It is in refraining from display that Rameau has ensured the greatest chance of immortality.[4]

Rameau's music was for Laloy and similar-minded critics "newer" and more modern than music by Wagner and Franck (the latter of whom had died less than 20 years before). Laudatory descriptions like these were common in *fin-de-siècle* Paris, as French critics and audiences seized on Rameau as the cultural icon of a French musical golden age.

Rameau's incontrovertible historical importance and subsequent neglect during the nineteenth century made him the perfect candidate for the burgeoning Operatic Museum. A number of critics used him as a figurehead for launching discussions of the place "early music" occupied both in the concert hall and on the stage. Félix Clément, for

[4] Lois Laloy, *Rameau* (Paris: Alcan, 1908), 181–82. "Les airs de danse et les morceaux descriptifs de Rameau brillent d'une splendeur inaltérée. Le temps, qui a fait tort à tant de gloires, semble avoir ajouté encore à leur beauté, y effaçant ce que les contemporains y voyaient de hardi, la rendant plus claire et plus harmonieuse. De toutes ces compositions, rien n'a vieilli, alors que Beethoven, Schubert, Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner et César Franck nous montrent tant de pages ou de phrases surannées. Rien ne perd aussi tôt sa fraîcheur qu'une effusion lyrique, fût-elle la plus touchant du monde, parce que rien ne change plus rapidement que nos manières de vivre. C'est en s'abstenant de paraitre en son œuvre que Rameau lui a assuré les plus grandes chances d'immortalité."

example, includes the following passage in the chapter on Rameau in his *Histoire de la musique* (1885):

> How regrettable it is that the art of music should not be thought of like the other arts, where one preserves masterworks in museums and palaces with such care, expense, and foresight! The smallest fragments of ancient statues, the sculptures of Michelangelo, the paintings of Raphael and Titian…are offered up for study, for admiration, to the judgment of the public, connoisseurs, and artists. Musical works that have been the object of enthusiasm for two or three generations, in which composers as great as the great painters, as great as the most perfect sculptors, have proven their genius, are allowed to fall into the deepest obscurity, and disappear under the dust of the libraries or grow mold [in the shops] on the quays, with no one caring to point out their beauties. One objects based on the changeability of public taste that would no longer support old-fashioned operas and antiquated forms. How does one know this? And moreover, it is not for amusing or distracting the masses that a government maintains great institutions dedicated to the fine arts, the Louvre and Cluny museums, the Sèvres and the Gobelins factories. … I have demanded for some years a sort of retrospective theater which would be for the great geniuses of the musical art what the Louvre is for ancient artists. It would create a much larger audience than one would think, composed of elite connoisseurs, people of delicate and practiced taste.[5]

For Clément, the state of "ancient" music existed as it the *fin-de-siècle* was reprehensible. While representative works from the histories of the other arts were presented for public

[5] Félix Clément, *Histoire de la musique depuis les temps anciens jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris : Hachette, 1885), 520–21. "Combien il est regrettable que l'art de la musique ne soit pas considéré comme les autres arts dont on conserve les chefs-d'œuvre dans les musées et les palais avec tant de soin, de dépense, de prévoyance ! Les moindres fragments des statues antiques, les sculptures de Michel-Ange, les tableaux de Raphaël et du Titien…sont offerts à l'étude, à l'admiration, au jugement du public, des amateurs et des artistes. Les ouvrages de musique qui ont été l'objet de l'enthousiasme de deux ou trois générations, dans lesquels des compositeurs aussi grands que les grands peintres, que les plus parfaits statuaires, ont fait preuve de génie, sont laissés dans l'oublie le plus profond, et disparaissent sous la poudre des bibliothèques ou moisissent sur les quais, sans qu'on se soucie d'en signaler les beautés. On tire des objections de la mobilité du goût du public qui ne supporterait plus un opéra démodé et des formes surannées. Qu'en sait-on ? Et d'ailleurs ce n'est pas pour égayer ou distraire la foule qu'un gouvernement maintient les grands établissements consacrés aux beaux-arts, les musées du Louvre, de Cluny, les manufactures de Sèvres et des Gobelins. … [J]e demande depuis tant d'années une sorte de théâtre rétrospectif qui soit pour les grands génies de l'art musical ce qu'est le Louvre pour les artistes anciens. Il se formerait un auditoire beaucoup plus nombreux qu'on ne le pense, composé d'une élite d'amateurs, de gens au goût délicat et exercé."

consumption on a regular basis, outdated music simply faded away into insignificance, regardless of its historical and/or aesthetic merits.

In 1908, after hearing *Hippolyte et Aricie* at the Opéra, Gabriel Fauré made a similar plea to Parisian theaters, suggesting that the State-Run opera houses were not doing enough to preserve France's musical history. He sought—precisely as Paul Dukas had with Gluck (see Chapter 3)—to place Rameau alongside modern works

> just as the works of Corneille, Racine, and Molière are permanently in the repertoire of the Comédie-Française and the Odéon. Such equal treatment of our past glories, is it not simple fairness? And would our sense of distinct national culture not have everything to gain?[6]

For Fauré, the performance of Rameau's music was not a simple matter of aesthetic preference. Instead, "classical" French music—and Rameau's in particular—formed an important element of French national identity.

Tellingly, for both Clément and Fauré, this demand for preservation of Rameau's music occurs in the midst of discussing the composer's operas. Though Rameau was prolific in a number of genres—and, as *fin-de-siècle* critics never tired of pointing out, he began composing dramatic works only at age 50—the operas took on a special significance for critics. In Clément's view, for example, the opera's clearly took center stage; he dated the period of Rameau's influence to the première of *Hippolyte et Aricie*: "For the history of music in France began a period of immense progress began on 1 October 1733, brought about entirely by the works of a single composer, Rameau, the

[6] *Le Figaro*, 14 May 1908. "les theaters subventionnés inscirvent les œuvres à leur répertoire, comme sont inscrites au répertoire de la Comédie-Française et de l'Odéon les œuvres de Corneille, de Racine, de Molière. Cette égalité de traitement envers nos gloires passées, ne serait-ce pas l'équité même ? Et la culture de notre individualité nationale n'aurait-elle pas tout à y gagner?"

greatest French musician of the eighteenth century."[7] Rameau's earlier works were deemed insignificant in the face of the major musical "progress" his dramatic works created. A similar qualitative distinction between operas and non-dramatic works continued after 1900. In 1901, shortly after the new edition of *Hippolyte et Aricie* was published (see the section below on the Complete Edition), Paul Dukas wrote in the *Revue hebdomadaire* that:

> The preceding volumes, less important, were devoted to his [Rameau's] harpsichord music…to his concert music, to his cantatas, and to his motets. This volume…inaugurates the long series of Rameau's operas. *Hippolyte et Aricie* was, in effect, the work with which its author made his debut at the Opéra in 1733…."[8]

Once again, Rameau's non-dramatic music was viewed as relatively insignificant, while the operas were positioned alongside the greatest masterworks of music history.

For many critics, Rameau's operas were the pinnacle of French eighteenth-century French musical styles; their grandeur captured perfectly the spirit and the glory of the *ancien régime*, including all the overtones of French cultural and military superiority that accompanied such an idea. In the sections that follow, I will trace the circumstances of Rameau's gradual return to the Parisian stage, beginning with his shifting role in the concert halls. After that point, I will examine in some detail the single most critical factor in the composer's reception during the *fin-de-siècle*—Rameau's "Frenchness"—and how

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[7] Clément, *Histoire de la musique*, 517. "À la date du 1er octobre 1733 [the première of *Hippolyte et Aricie*] commence pour l'histoire de la musique en France une période d'immenses progrès, remplie tout entière par les œuvres d'un seul compositeur, de Rameau, le plus grand des musiciens français au dix-huitième siècle."

[8] *Revue hebdomadaire*, May 1901. Reprinted in *Les Écrits de Paul Dukas sur la musique* (Paris: Société d'Éditions Françaises et internationales, 1948), 545. "Les volumes précédents, moins importants, étaient consacrés à sa musique de clavecin…à sa musique concertante, à ses cantates et à ses motets. Ce volume-ci…inaugure la longue série des opéras de Rameau. *Hippolyte et Aricie* fut, en effet, l'ouvrage avec lequel son auteur débuta à l'Opéra en 1733…."

that aspect resurrected the infamous "Querelle des Bouffons." Finally, I explore in some detail the two productions of Rameau's operas in the early twentieth century: *Hippolyte et Aricie* in 1908 and *Castor et Pollux* a decade later.

**Rameau in the Concert Hall**

Rameau's operas, like Gluck's, underwent an extended gestation period on Parisian concert series before eventually appearing on the operatic stage. Excerpts were fairly common beginning in the 1880s, with the most popular operas being *Castor et Pollux* and *Hippolyte et Aricie*. The length of these excerpts generally increased around the turn of the century moving from isolated arias, choruses, or instrumental works to complete opera acts. The programs of the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire are illustrative of this trend (see Table 4.1): a single chorus from *Castor et Pollux* (almost certainly the ever-popular "En ces doux asiles") was performed in five concert seasons between 1877 and 1900, making up the vast majority of Rameau's music that appeared on the concert series during that time.[9] After 1900, however, longer excerpts became the norm; in 1902, for example, both the extended Airs de Ballet from *Les Indes galantes* and a portion of Act 3 of *Hippolyte et Aricie* were featured programs. Excerpts from *Les Indes galantes* (this time including vocal music) was programmed in 1904, portions of *Platée* in 1908, and so on.

This gradual increase in the length of excerpts has several possible causes. The first is the most obvious: the availability of scores. It is likely no accident, for example, that the first significant excerpt from a Rameau opera to appear during the *fin-de-siècle* was from *Hippolyte et Aricie* in 1902—only two years after the score of that work was

[9] Several of Rameau's sacred works also appeared on programs at the Société des Concerts, including his motets *Quam dliecta* (1898 and 1903) and *In convertendo* (1902)

published in the *Œuvres complètes* (which I address in detail below). Similarly, the Airs de Ballet from *Les Indes galantes* were performed in 1902, the same year the edition of that opera was published, excerpts from *Platée* were given the year after that edition appeared, and so on (see Table 4.3 for the order of the Rameau edition).

**Table 4.1: Rameau at the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, 1875–1918**

| **Works** | **Dates** |
|---|---|
| Chorus from *Castor et Pollux* | 1877 |
| "Trio et choeur des Parques" from *Hippolyte et Aricie* | 1881 |
| Chorus from *Castor et Pollux* | 1883 |
| Excerpts (Chorus, Rigodon, Trio and Chorus) from *Dardanus* | 1887 |
| Chorus from *Castor et Pollux* | 1888 |
| Chorus from *Castor et Pollux* | 1889 |
| Chorus from *Castor et Pollux* | 1900 |
| Excerpt from *Hippolyte et Aricie*, Act 3 | 1902 |
| *Les Indes galantes*, Airs de Ballet | 1902 |
| Excerpts from *Les Indes galantes* (opera, S.-S./Dukas edition) | 1904 |
| Excerpts from *Platée* | 1908 |
| *Les Indes galantes*, Airs de Ballet | 1908 |
| Overture to *Zaïs* | 1914 |
| Excerpts from *Hippolyte et Aricie* | 1914 |

More subtle, however, was the way in which longer and longer excerpts familiarized the audience with Rameau's music, preparing listeners, it would seem, for the ultimate goal of seeing a complete opera. Jann Pasler has noted the extent to which concert programs shaped French musical taste during the *fin-de-siècle*, a "refining" process that encouraged a preference for "serious" music over the lighter fare that had dominated the concert scene before the 1890s.[10] Increasing awareness of French music history was a major goal of several series during this time, and Rameau's works fulfilled

[10] See Jann Pasler, "Concert Programs and Their Narratives as Emblems of Ideology," in *Writing Through Music: Essays on Music, Culture, and Politics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008): 365–416.

a significant part of that educative mission. His name appears with regularity, for example, on a series at the popular Concerts Colonne from 1897 to 1901 that mixed *musique ancienne* with *musique moderne*.

Although Rameau's music became increasingly common fare on programs from a number of concert series around 1900, nowhere were his works featured more frequently than at the Schola Cantorum. Almost every year between 1900 and 1909 (excepting 1905) the Schola's concert series featured at least one work by Rameau, often extended excerpts (see Table 4.2). During that time Vincent d'Indy, the Schola's director, also produced concert versions of several "complete" (i.e., probably with some significant cuts) versions of *Zoroastre* (1903), *La Guirlande* (1903), *Dardanus* (1907), and *Castor et Pollux* (1909). The last of these was performed five times in rapid succession—a rarity for Schola productions, which were typically one-time occurrences. These concert performances served as an important transition between the concert morsels and brief excerpts seen on most concert series and the first fully staged production at the Opéra of *Hippolyte et Aricie* in 1908. Surprisingly, given the focus on Rameau's operas seen at the Schola after 1900, after 1909 productions of Rameau's operas, whole or in part, suddenly ceased.[11] This change, however, seems to be less a reflection specifically on Rameau than a more general rethinking of the Schola's repertoire. Between 1909 and the start of World War I, the school simply stopped presenting complete operas of any kind, preferring instead longer religious works such as Handel's *Messiah* and Bach's B minor mass, as well as sacred Renaissance works such as masses by Palestrina.

[11] It is possible that one performance, on 22 December 1910, may have contained some Rameau arias.

**Table 4.2: Rameau's Operas at the Schola Cantorum**

| **Work** | **Dates** |
|---|---|
| Excerpts from *Castor et Pollux* | 1894 |
| Excerpts from *Castor et Pollux, Les Indes galantes,* and *Hippolyte et Aricie* | 1894 |
| Excerpts from *Dardanus* and *Hippolyte et Aricie* | 1895 |
| Excerpt from *Hippolyte et Aricie* | 1900 |
| Excerpt from *Dardanus,* Act 2 | 1901 |
| "Trio des songes" from *Dardanus,* Excerpt from *Hippolyte et Aricie,* Act 4 | 1901 |
| Excerpt from *Castor et Pollux* | 1902 |
| Unspecified Arias | 1902 |
| Excerpts from *Hippolyte et Aricie* and *Castor et Pollux* | 1903 |
| Excerpts from *Castor et Pollux* | 1903 |
| Excerpt from *Dardanus,* Act 2 | 1903 |
| *La Guirlande* | 1903 |
| Excerpts from *La Guirlande* | 1903 |
| *Zoroastre* (complete?) | 1903 |
| *Hippolyte et Aricie,* Act 4 | 1904 |
| Excerpt from *Hippolyte et Aricie,* Act 4 | 1904 |
| Excerpts from *Castor et Pollux,* Acts 1 and 2 | 1904 |
| Excerpts from *Zoroastre* | 1906 |
| *Dardanus* (complete?) | 1907 |
| Excerpts from *L'Entretien des muses* and *Dardanus* | 1908 |
| *Castor et Pollux* (series of 5 performances) | 1909 |
| *Dardanus* (abridged) | 1909 |
| Unspecified works (possibly arias) | 1910 |

The critical response to *fin-de-siècle* Parisian concert performances of Rameau's works was mixed. Clément complained in 1885 about the quality of the performers:

> One should not say that one has any idea of the music of the old masters by the excerpts sung in some concerts or printed in some collections. The performance of it is generally pitiful, because it has not been prepared with the learnedness and the attention that it demands.[12]

[12] Clément, *Histoire de la musique,* 521. "Qu'on ne dise pas qu'on a une idée de la musique des maîtres anciens par les fragments chantés dans quelques concerts ou gravés dans quelques recueils. L'exécution en est généralement pitoyable, parce qu'elle n'a pas été préparée avec la science et l'attention qu'elle exige."

In other words, Clément warned audiences against judging Rameau based on the "generally pitiful" concert performances, which were evidently tossed off without much concern for the quality. This perceived inferiority frustrated a number of critics, some of whom believed that Rameau's newfound popularity stemmed more from a sense of popular trends rather than from a deeper appreciation for his works. Jullien is a prime example: as we have seen, he was perfectly willing to place Rameau among the greatest figures of music history, but the proliferation of the composer's works on concerts left Jullien cold. He accused Reynaldo Hahn, an advocate of early music (and the "authentic" performance thereof) of, in Catrina Flint de Médicis's words, "pandering to public whimsy."[13] In particular, Jullien suggested that Hahn had abandoned Mozart after the successful 1903 production of *Don Giovanni* (see Chapter 3), turning instead to the trendier field of French early music:

> Reynaldo Hahn, made fashionable by the success his scrupulously exact restoration of *Don Giovanni* had last year, and feeling that the fashion of today turns towards the old master of French opera, just offered…two sessions where he had various pages of the most beautiful operas of Lully and Rameau performed, and this curious endeavor, which came just at the right moment, has been crowned with the most lively success.[14]

[13] Catrina Flint de Médicis, "The Schola Cantorum, Early Music, and French Political Culture from 1894 to 1914" (Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, 2006), 326. De Médicis covers in some detail Jullien's reception of Rameau during this time (see pp. 325–330); the critic, she points out, "addresses almost every major issue affecting the reception of Rameau's works" (325) in his writings in the *Journal des débats* during this time period. This material may also be found in Catrina Flint de Médicis, "Nationalism and Early Music at the French *Fin de Siècle*: Three Case Studies," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 1/2 (2004): 43–66.

[14] *Le Journal des débats*, 4 June 1905. "M. Reynaldo Hahn, mis en goût par le succès que sa restitution minutieusement exacte de Don Giovanni eut l'année dernière et sentant que la mode aujourd'hui tourne du côté des vieux maîtres de l'opéra français, vient de donner…deux séances où il faisait entendre diverses pages empruntées aux plus beaux opéras de Lulli et Rameau, et cette curieuse tentative, qui arrivait bien à son heure, a été couronné du plus vif succès."

Indeed, Jullien rejected the commodification of early music—and Rameau's music in particular—for mass audiences. While Rameau's utter neglect was inexcusable, a purely superficial appreciation of his music—the type of appreciation that Jullien insinuated Hahn's concerts and similar endeavors were creating—was equally dangerous.

Before 1900, the repertoire options were limited for musical directors, however, as only a few excerpts from Rameau's operas were published in orchestral score. The scores for most of the pre-1900 performances at the Société des Concerts, for example, almost surely originated from Ernest Deldevez's 1859 *Piéces diverses choisies dans les œuvres des célèbres compositeurs*, a collection of orchestrated excerpts from operas from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century operatic composers. Selections of this kind were heavily adapted from their original forms, particularly before 1900. As Katharine Ellis points out, the "Trio des Parques" from *Hippolyte et Aricie* as performed in 1881 at the Société des Concerts (which Deldevez conducted from 1872–1885), would have been a mélange of music from two different acts of the opera, focusing on the choral writing at the expense of both instrumental and solo vocal music.[15] After about 1900, however, the Société des Concerts likely began using the new Rameau complete edition, which would have mitigated this issue somewhat. Likewise, at the Schola, d'Indy certainly used the complete edition, for which he edited several major works. This edition was crucial in shaping the way Rameau's music was performed and understood at the *fin-de-siècle*, and its creation was one of the major efforts at memorializing Rameau during that time.

[15] Katharine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past: Early Music in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 75–76.

## The Rameau *Œuvres complètes* and its Editors

In 1894, the composer Albéric Magnard issued a rallying cry for French musicians to support their historical predecessors, and Rameau in particular.[16] Due to family connections, Magnard was able to make his bold claims in a major public forum: *Le Figaro*, where his father, François Magnard, was the editor. This appeal was couched in typical nationalist rhetoric, citing the numerous editions other nations had created for their own great composers, implying that the absence of similar French editions was a symptom of a lack of patriotism.[17] After listing a number of Rameau's qualities, Magnard asked his compatriots a question:

> Why, then [given the quality of his music], does Rameau almost never appear on the programs of our theaters or our concerts, why is he only known to a few musicians and library rats? The reason, alas, is entirely to our shame.
>
> There is not a single modern complete and correct edition of Rameau.
>
> In Germany, Breitkopf is completing the publication of Bach's immense *œuvre*. In Belgium, Gervaert has reestablished the scores of Grétry. In England, the complete edition of Handel has been finished for some time. Will we remain behind our neighbors? Will we leave the scores and manuscripts of our most glorious musician in the dust of the conservatories?
>
> …
>
> The task would be long and costly, but there remains in us, I presume, some sense of national pride, and we would not back down in the face of expenses that are covered by the government in England, and by the mass of subscribers in Germany….

[16] For a study of the influence of Classical French music, and particularly Rameau and Gluck, on Magnard's own music, see Jens Malte Fischer, "Klassizistischer Wagnérisme? Albéric Magnard und seine 'tragédies en musique,'" in *Von Wagner zum Wagnérisme: Musik, Literatur, Kunst, Politik*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Maneula Schwartz (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1999): 229–63.

[17] Ellis briefly discusses Magnard and the subsequent Rameau edition in *Interpreting the Musical Past*, 141.

> Will anyone hear me bell ringing the bell memory of Rameau? I doubt it. We are not very curious about music in France, and our musicians have little respect for the past.[18]

This clarion call, once sounded, was not easily ignored. Musicians and publishers who did not act quickly to rescue the French master from his unjust neglect opened themselves to charges of un-patriotic behavior, or, at the very least, they confirmed Magnard's allegation that French musicians had "little respect for the past."

Other critics were quick to take up Magnard's cause. Only a few months later, Paul Dukas seconded the need for a new Rameau edition. After pointing out the treatment Gluck had recently been given in the Pelletan/Saint-Saëns edition of his operatic works (see Chapter 3), Dukas wondered why Rameau had not received similar attention:

> There is another master, this one completely French, towards whom we would like to see treated in an equally generous manner. We dare not ask the Opéra to attempt the restoration of one of Rameau's masterworks, since it is already impossible to have Gluck represented in the repertoire of this theater, which should be, however, by its title and its sumptuous subvention, like the Louvre of music. But at least it would be desirable to establish a serious edition of his works that would permit connoisseurs to

[18] *Le Figaro*, 29 March 1894. "Pourquoi donc Rameau ne figure-t-il presque jamais au programme de nos théâtres et de nos concerts, n'est-il connu que de quelques musiciens et rats de bibliothèque ? La raison, hélas ! est tout à notre honte .

Il n'existe pas une seule édition moderne complète et correcte de Rameau.

En Allemagne, la maison Breitkopf termine la publication de l'œuvre immense de Bach. En Belgique, M. Gervaert a rétabli les partitions de Grétry. En Angleterre, l'édition intégrale de Haendel est achevée depuis longtemps. Resterons-nous en arrière de nos voisins ? Laisserons-nous dans la poussière des Conservatoires les partitions et les manuscrits de notre plus glorieux musicien ?

…

La tâche serait longue, coûteuse, mais il nous reste, je présume, quelque amour-propre national et nous ne reculerions pas devant des dépenses qui sont couvertes en Angleterre par le gouvernement, en Allemagne par la masse des souscripteurs…

Mon coup de cloche en mémoire de Rameau sera-il [*sic*] entendu ? J'en doute. Nous sommes peu curieux de musique en France et nos musiciens sont peu respectueux du passé."

> familiarize themselves with them and permit concert orchestras to popularize some excerpts.[19]

Later in the year, the music publishing house Durand acceded to these pleas, and agreed to take on the task of editing the first complete edition of Rameau's works.[20] Saint-Saëns was chosen to be the general editor (as Magnard had suggested in his column), with the musicologist Charles Malherbe appointed to the task of writing the extensive critical notes for each volume. The first volume in the *Œuvres complètes* appeared in 1895, with an additional volume following each year, until the outbreak of World War I in 1914 brought the enterprise to a halt. One additional volume appeared after the war (in 1924), but due to several factors (including the death of Saint-Saëns in 1921), the edition never regained its pre-war momentum and ultimately remained incomplete.

Contemporary critics—and modern musicologists—have been happy to accept at face value this dramatic narrative of a young composer sparking new interest in Rameau, and the famous publishing house and a number of influential composers and scholars rushing to the ancient master's defense. The timing of these events is suspicious, however, and the response a bit too convenient. In only

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[19] *Revue hebdomadaire*, August 1894. Reprinted in *Les écrits de Paul Dukas sur la musique*, 192. "Il est un autre maître, complètement français celui-là, envers lequel nous voudrions qu'on en usât d'une manière aussi généreuse. Nous n'osons pas demander que l'Opéra tente la reconstitution d'un des chefs-d'œuvre de Rameau puisqu'il est déjà impossible d'obtenir que Gluck soit représenté au répertoire de ce théâtre qui devrait être, cependant, de par son titre et sa fastueuse subvention, comme le Louvre de la musique. Mais au moins serait-il désirable qu'une édition sérieusement établie de ses œuvres permît aux amateurs de ses les rendre familières et aux orchestres de concert d'en populariser quelques fragments."

[20] Brian Rees points out that Jacques Durand in particular was a driving force in the Rameau edition. Brian Rees, *Camille Saint-Saëns: A Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999), 317. While this edition was to be the first *complete* Rameau edition, several piano/vocal scores of Rameau's stage works had already on the *Chefs-d'œuvre de l'opéra français* series, begun in 1880 by the Michaëlis publishing house. These editions were, however, deemed too unscholarly (at least by the standard of the Durand edition), and unworthy of Rameau; in addition, they did not have orchestral parts and so did not encourage the performance of his works either on stage on in the concert hall.

a year, Magnard's highly public call to arms led to the publication of the first volume in the *Œuvres complètes*, an unusual feat of editorial alacrity.[21] Magnard was not without connections to those in charge of the new edition. He was a close friend (and former student) of d'Indy (who edited a number of volumes in the edition), and would later teach at the Schola Cantorum. Furthermore, Magnard was well acquainted with Jacques Durand, having attended both *lycée* (high school) and classes at the Conservatoire with him.[22] It certainly seems possible that Magnard had already made some arrangements with Durand before writing the letter in *Le Figaro*, and that work had already begun on the edition. Perhaps Magnard, with his connections at *Le Figaro*, was simply chosen by Durand (or d'Indy, who had been an advocate for Rameau for some time) to be the voice of this appeal.

The purpose for Magnard's missal, then, was to elicit public support for the venture, particularly in the form of subscribers, or perhaps even a government subsidy. After all, Magnard pointed out specifically that the edition would be costly, but called on French nationalism to provide for "expenses that are covered by the government in England, and by the mass of subscribers in Germany." He then blatantly attempted to bully readers into buying subscriptions out of a sense

[21] Charles Malherbe, in an article entitled "Le Ramisme" in *Le Courrier musical*, reported that Magnard received a letter from Durand a few days after his original appeal in *Le Figaro* agreeing to undertake the edition. *Le Courier musical*, 15 May 1908.

[22] Durand mentions these connections with Magnard in his memoires, *Quelques souvenirs d'un éditeur de musique* (Paris: Durand, 1924), 57. Durand (pp. 99–104) supports the dramatic narrative that he and his father read Magnard's article in *Le Figaro* and immediately leapt into action, focusing all their energies on creating the Rameau edition.

of national duty, lamenting that probably no one would heed his pleas, and that "we are not very curious about music in France."

Whatever the exact circumstances of its origins, the new edition was perceived as a major contribution to French music history. Saint-Saëns, for one, certainly felt that the Durand *Œuvres complètes* filled a major lacuna:

> Rameau, the greatest French composer of the 18th century, whose works held so important a place on the stage, had become almost forgotten in the 20th. A few pieces for the harpsichord and the delightful chorus, "En ces doux asiles" [from *Castor et Pollux*], were almost all that anyone knew of him, for practically the whole of his work had remained unpublished.
>
> This injustice has now come to an end, thanks to Durand, who undertook the gigantic task of publishing the complete works of this marvelous genius, the contemporary and rival of Sebastian Bach.[23]

Fresh from completing the Pelletan edition of Gluck's operas (see Chapter 3), Saint-Saëns took to this new project with gusto. In his 1922 biography of the composer (also published by Durand), Jean Bonnerot emphasized the seriousness with which Saint-Saëns approached editing Rameau's music—and the editorial strategies he used in doing so:

> In order to establish a complete and correct text, he was aided by scholars who managed the work, made copies, and noted the variants. The new edition adopted modern notation, discarding "those of the ornaments that no longer have any reason to be, due to changes in the instruments for which they were imagined." It faithfully reproduces the thought of the author in suppressing "parasitic insertions, tempo indications, nuances, and fingerings" that obstruct without benefit. Saint-Saëns took care to inspect everything personally in the manuscripts, to weight everything, here interpreting with the respect owed to an old master, and there, transposing the voices. … Every year Saint-Saëns spent several weeks reviewing the text of the prepared volume. Under his care, seventeen volumes were published; this was not one of the least important services

[23] Camille Saint-Saëns, "A Note on Rameau," in *Outspoken Essays on Music*, trans. Fred Rothwell (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trubner; New York: Dutton, 1922), 89.

> that he did for music, to have resurrected, after Gluck, Rameau, the glorious contemporary of Sébastien [J. S.] Bach.[24]

Here Bonnerot calls attention to amount of time and effort that Saint-Saëns put into the edition, devoting "several weeks" per year to the project, and reviewing all editorial decisions personally. The goals of this luxurious new edition were explicitly nationalist. The preface to the first volume (the keyboard works) begins with the following statement of purpose:

> In publishing this first volume of Rameau's works, the editors have set for themselves a double goal: first, to pay homage to the memory one of the greatest composers that France has produced; following that, to increase awareness of his works and contribute to popularizing them by putting within reach of everyone what the curious could previously only discover from antiquated editions or ancient manuscripts from our libraries.[25]

The explicit primary goal of the edition—"to pay homage to the memory of one of the greatest composers that France has produced"—was significant. By mentioning France directly, the editors cast their project in a nationalist light, suggesting that the edition is a necessary tribute to Rameau, a composer neglected for too long by his compatriots.

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[24] Jean Bonnerot, *C. Saint-Saëns (1835–1921): Sa vie et son œuvre* (Paris: Durand, 1922), 160–161. " Pour établir un texte complet et correct, il fut aidé par des érudits qui débrouillèrent le travail, firent des copies, notèrent les variantes. On adopta la notation moderne, en écartant « ceux des ornements qui n'avaient plus leur raison d'être par suite des transformations de l'instrument en vue duquel on les avait imaginés. » On reproduisit fidèlement la pensée de l'auteur en supprimant « les interpolations parasites, indications de mouvements, de nuances, de doigté », qui encombrent sans profit. Saint-Saëns prit soin de tout contrôler lui-même sur les manuscrits, de tout peser, ici interprétant avec le respect dû au maître ancien, et là, transposant les voix. …Chaque année Saint-Saëns passait quelques semaines à revoir le texte du volume préparé. Par ses soins dix-sept volumes ont été publiés et ce ne sera pas l'un des moindres services qu'il aura rendus à la musique que d'avoir ressuscité, après Gluck, Rameau, le glorieux contemporain de Sébastien Bach."

[25] Preface to Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Pièces de Claveçin, Œuvres complètes*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Durand, 1895), i. "En publiant ce premier volume des œuvres de Rameau, les éditeurs se sont proposé un double but : d'abord rendre hommage à la mémoire d'un des plus grands compositeurs que la France ait produits ; ensuite faciliter la connaissance de ses ouvrages et contribuer à les populariser en mettant à la portée de tous ce que les curieux ont été trop longtemps seuls à découvrir parmi les anciennes éditions ou les vieux manuscrits de nos bibliothèques."

Furthermore, the invocation of memory here directly invests the edition with the quality of a memorial, equally as tangible as any memorial statue. Such ideology resonates with the idea of creating a *lieu de mémoire* for Rameau, a place of cultural memory by which the French could celebrate their artistic heritage. Rameau's music itself, while the subject of artistic and cultural reverence, was inherently intangible and invisible; the new edition provided a physical object to represent the composer's—and France's—musical glories. Finally, this bold goal from the editors had an aspect of public appeal. By providing these modern scores to "everyone" (or at least everyone who could afford them) rather than only to those who were willing to delve into musty libraries to find manuscripts and early prints, the editors sought to bring Rameau to a larger audience and to facilitate public performances of his works—a process that would culminate in Rameau's return to the Opéra.

Rameau's operas were, without question, the crowning jewel of this new edition. The first to be published, *Hippolyte et Aricie*, appeared in 1900, and the preface made it clear that this was a new, and particularly significant, stage of the project:

> The sixth volume of the complete works of Jean-Philippe Rameau, which appears in 1900, also constitutes the first of a new series. The preceding volumes were dedicated to instrumental or religious music; they contained the keyboard works, the cantatas, and the motets. However, it is to dramatic music that the old master dedicated the principal efforts of his genius; it alone must occupy us from now on. *Tragédies lyriques*, opera-ballets, comedies, pastorales, and divertissements will follow in chronological order; each year will see the rebirth of one of the the masterworks of the last century. We begin with *Hippolyte et Aricie*, the first ring of a long and glorious chain.[26]

[26] Preface to Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Hippolyte et Aricie*, *Œuvres Complètes*, Vol. 6 (Paris: Durand, 1900), i. "Le sixième volume des œuvres complètes de Jean-Philippe Rameau, qui paraît en 1900, forme aussi le premier d'une série nouvelle. Les précédents étaient consacrés à la musique instrumentale et à la musique religieuse; ils contenaient des pièces de clavecin, des cantates, des motets. Or, c'est à la musique dramatique que le vieux maître a consacré le principal effort de son génie; elle seule doit nous occuper

The editors, it would seem, viewed the operas as the major focus of the *Œuvres complètes*. It is not surprising, then, that many of the major figures in *fin-de-siècle* French musical culture contributed their editorial efforts to producing the editions of new editions of Rameau's operas.

Although Saint-Saëns oversaw the entire edition (and edited the entirety of some earlier volumes), many of the operas were edited by other musicians (See Table 4.3 for a complete list). D'Indy, Dukas, Debussy, and Hahn—all of whom were outspoken advocates of Rameau—edited volumes, as did other noted musical figures such as the organist/pedagogues Alexandre Guilmant and August Chapuis (both of whom were professors at the Conservatoire at the time they edited the Rameau volumes).

The editorial strategies used in the *Œuvres complètes* are revealing about both *fin-de-siècle* perceptions of Rameau and the concept of "authenticity" in general during this time. In his description of Saint-Saëns's involvement with the project, Bonnerot pointed out several aspects of his editorial policies that seem highly questionable today, including the removal of ornaments (particularly in the keyboard works) and the transposition of vocal parts to accommodate modern vocal ranges (i.e., to compensate for the lack of castrato singers). Yet overall Bonnerot clearly felt that Saint-Saëns was being "faithful" to Rameau's intentions; the alterations were understood to be necessary for the modernization of the work.

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désormais. Tragédies lyriques, opéras-ballets, comédies, pastorales, divertissements vont se suivre dans l'ordre chronologique; chaque année verra renaître un des chefs-d'œuvre du siècle dernier. Nous commençons avec *Hippolyte et Aricie*, premier anneau d'une chaîne longue et glorieuse."

**Table 4.3: Operas published in the Rameau *Oeuvres complètes***

| Work | Date Published | Editor |
|---|---|---|
| *Hippolyte et Aricie* | 1900 | Vincent d'Indy |
| *Les Indes galantes* | 1902 | Paul Dukas |
| *Castor et Pollux* | 1903 | Auguste Chapuis |
| *Les Fêtes d'Hébé* | 1904 | Alexandre Guilmant |
| *Dardanus* | 1905 | Vincent d'Indy |
| *La Princesse de Navarre/Les Fêtes de Ramire/Nélée et Myrthis/Zephyre* | 1906 | Paul Dukas (*La Princesse de Navarre*)/ Camille Saint-Saëns |
| *Platée* | 1907 | Georges Marty |
| *Les Fêtes de Polymnie* | 1908 | Claude Debussy |
| *La Temple de la Gloire* | 1909 | Alexandre Guilmant |
| *Les Fêtes de l'Hymen et de l'Amour* | 1910 | Reynaldo Hahn |
| *Zaïs* | 1911 | Vincent d'Indy |
| *Pygmalion/Les Surprises de l'Amour* | 1913 | Henri Büsser |
| *Anacreon/Les Sybarites* | 1913 | Henri Büsser |
| *Naïs* | 1924 | Reynaldo Hahn |

While most of the editors were primarily concerned with preserving Rameau's music "authentically," others, particularly d'Indy, were more cavalier with Rameau's scores. In an indignant 1993 article, Graham Sadler (himself the editor of a number of Rameau's works in modern editions) accused d'Indy of outright "forgery," pointing out that "the volumes edited by Dukas, Chapuis, and, above all, d'Indy are seriously flawed. They are specially misleading in two respects: the orchestration has often been distorted and the part-writing 'improved'."[27] D'Indy's major alterations consisted of the addition of inner voices, and, on a number of occasions, the wholesale invention of independent

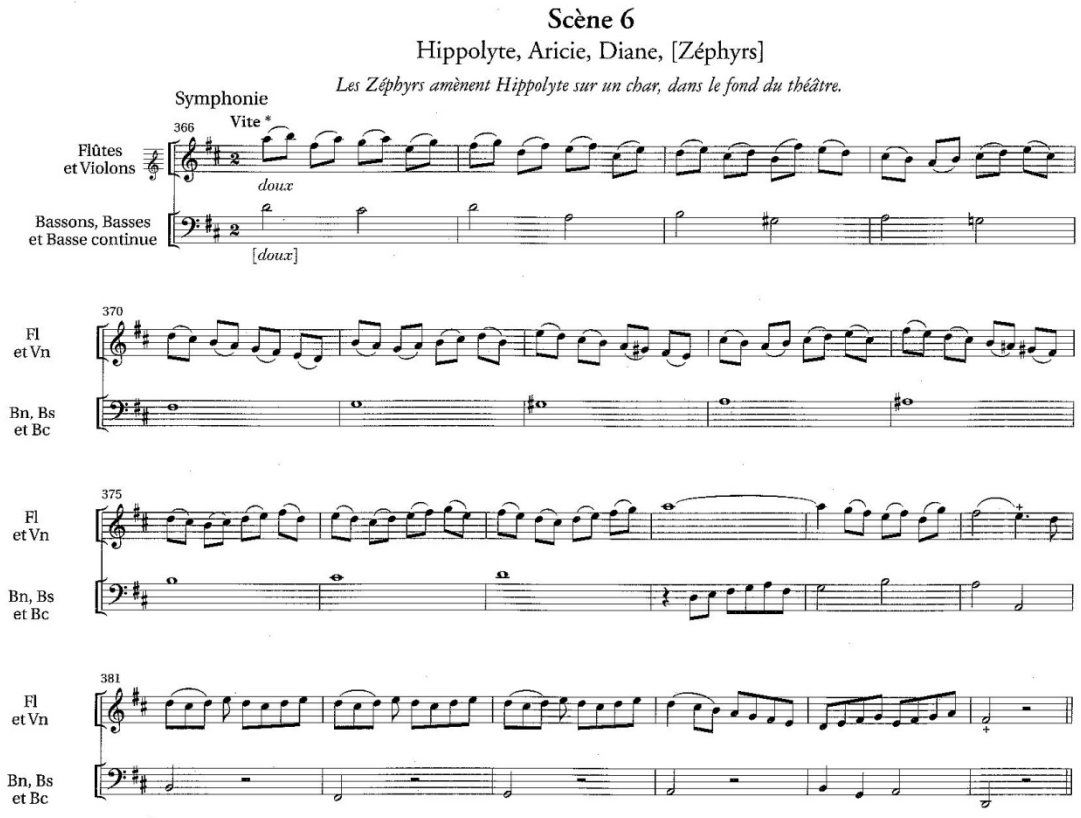
[27] Graham Sadler, "Vincent d'Indy and the Rameau *Œuvres complètes*: A Case of Forgery?" *Early Music* 21 (1993), 415.

musical lines (often in sections clearly marked "unison"). The brief instrumental entrance of the Zephyrs near the end of the final Act of *Hippolyte et Aricie* serves as a clear example. Scored for basso continuo and unison flutes and violins in Rameau's original (see Example 4.1), the dance was evidently not complex enough for d'Indy. His alterations, visible in Example 4.2, include the addition of two inner string parts (second violin and viola) that fundamentally change the character of the piece, creating, in Sadler's words, "a jolly but anachronistic oom-pah effect." [28]

Dukas's alterations to *Les Indes galantes,* while less severe in nature, are equally revealing. Anya Suschitzky has demonstrated Dukas's efforts to restore the "original" version of the opera, blatantly ignoring later changes to instrumentation (especially the simplification of string passages) and the notes themselves.[29] The fact that Dukas focused on making Rameau's compositions appear as complex as possible, ignoring any changes that appeared to simplify or "water down" the music, is significant. While on one level these choices seem to reflect Dukas's attempt to follow Rameau's "original intentions," his product, like d'Indy's, was aimed at making the composer into a more progressive

[28] Sadler views this piece as a particularly egregious instance of d'Indy's tampering. Sadler, "Vincent d'Indy and the Rameau *Œuvres completes*," 416.

[29] Anya Suschitzky, "The Nation on Stage: Wagner and French Opera at the End of the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. diss, University of California, Berkeley, 1999), 124–39.

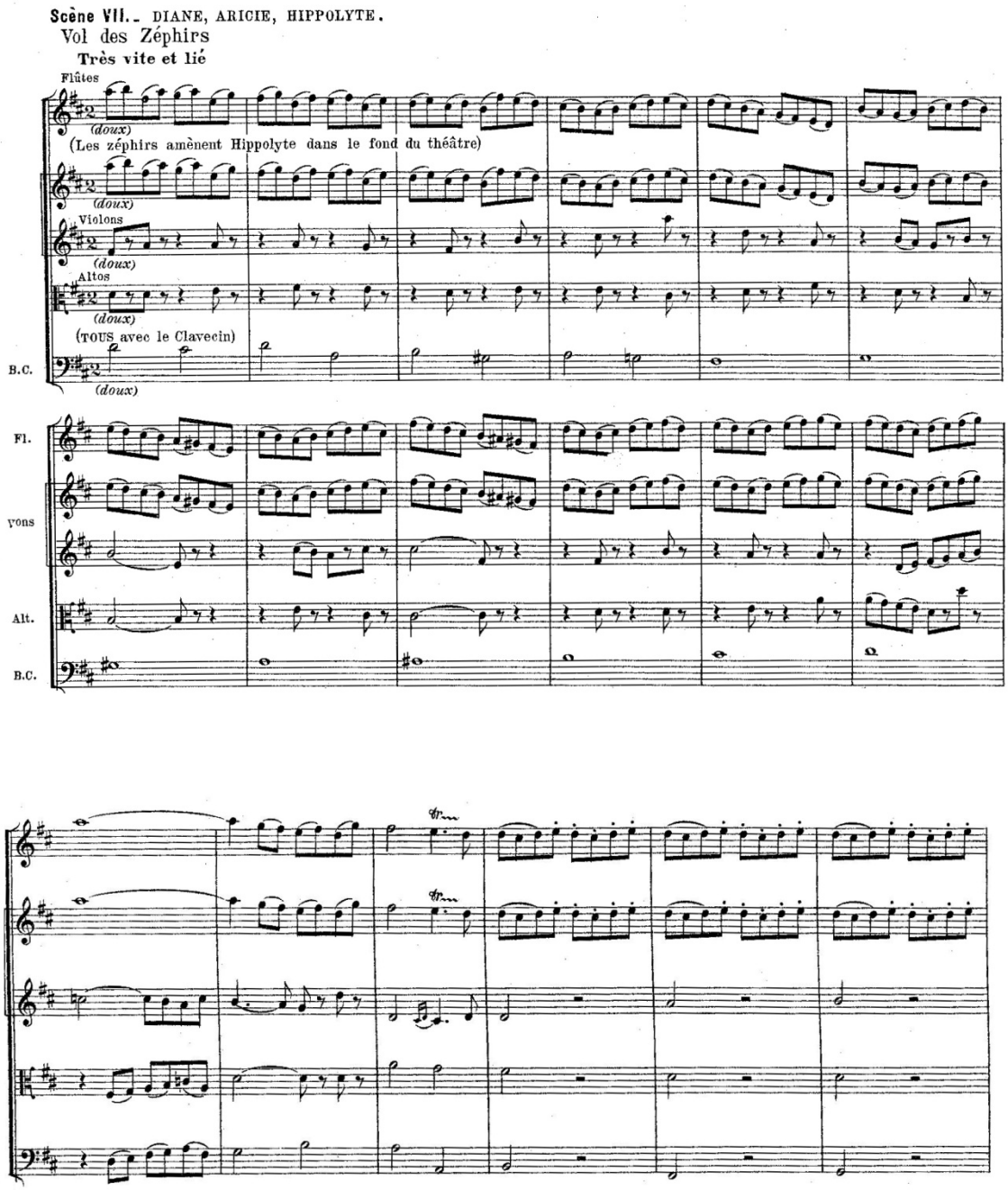



**Example 4.1: Entrance of the Zephyrs from *Hippolyte et Aricie*, Act V. From Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Opera Omnia*, Series 4, Vol. 1: *Hippolyte et Aricie*. Ed. Sylvie Bouissou. Paris: Billaudot, 2002.**

figure; as Suschitzky succinctly puts it: "The more modern and impressive Rameau looked, the better France looked."[30]

While it seems clear that the editors of the *Œuvres complètes* had in mind the goal of enabling Rameau to withstand comparison to Bach and Handel—thus protecting France from appearing inferior to Germany in the realm of eighteenth-century music—several of the editors likely had more personal goals in mind, as well. D'Indy, Dukas, and Debussy each traced his compositional lineage to Rameau, albeit by different paths. As I explored with Gluck in Chapter 3, d'Indy perceived that the eighteenth-century *tragédie*

[30] Suschitzky, "The Nation on Stage," 136.




**Example 4.2: Excerpt from entrance of the Zephyrs from *Hippolyte et Aricie*, Act V. From Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. 6: *Hippolyte et Aricie*. Ed. Vincent d'Indy. Paris: Durand, 1900.**

*lyrique*, typified by Rameau and later by Gluck, essentially "migrated" (to use Ellis's term) to Germany, leading to Weber and eventually to Wagner.[31] Since d'Indy traced his own musical style directly to Wagner, this created a clear historical lineage for himself: through Rameau (French), Gluck (French/German), Weber (German), and Wagner (German) ultimately to d'Indy (French). Furthermore, if Wagner's music was itself so indebted to French styles, in emulating the Master of Bayreuth d'Indy was not being Germanic in style—on the contrary, he was returning a fundamentally French style to its homeland.[32] In this light, d'Indy's choices as a major editor for the Rameau *Œuvres complètes* are understandable. In making Rameau a more progressive (through the addition of additional contrapuntal inner voices, etc.), d'Indy was making his own lineage clearer; in other words, the more "progressive" he made Rameau style seem, the closer it was to his own style.[33]

The connection between Dukas's and Debussy's editing and their musical agendas is less direct, but no less important; both composers were (self)-positioned as modern heirs to Rameau's musical style. Rameau's historical importance figured prominently in Dukas's music criticism from the late 1890s on, particularly in the critic's

[31] Ellis has briefly examined the Rameau's role in d'Indy's *Cours de composition musical*, noting the fact that d'Indy begins the "flowering" of French opera in 1733, when *Hippolyte et Aricie* was premièred at the Opéra. Katharine Ellis, "En Route to Wagner: Explaining d'Indy's Early Music Pantheon," in *Vincent d'Indy et son temps*, ed. Manuela Schwartz (Sprimont, Belgium: Mardaga, 2006), 114.

[32] Such an approach also allowed d'Indy to minimize the importance of mid-century Grand Opera, which he considered to be unsavory and dominated by "Jewish" music, particularly Meyerbeer. If Rameau, a Catholic composer, founded this dramatic style, d'Indy could trace his way through Wagner and back to its fundamentally Catholic roots.

[33] The cyclical nature of this narrative (France–Germany–France) would likely have appealed to d'Indy, as well. Jann Pasler has argued that d'Indy conceived of history not linearly but in a spiral, returning to the past in order to go forward. Jann Pasler, "Paris: Conflicting Notions of Progress," in *The Late Romantic Era*, ed. Jim Samson (London: Macmillan, 1991): 389–416, particularly 401–406.

perennial call for an Operatic Museum. The creation of the *Oeuvres complètes* was also, not surprisingly, a major musical coup from Dukas's perspective:

> For a long time, Rameau slept in the dust of our libraries. He would sleep there still, if his *œuvre* were not, thanks to the initiative of A. Durand and Son, reappearing little by little in an luxurious and reconstructed edition, this time based on the original documents revised according to the most scrupulous critical methods.[34]

Here Dukas not only praises the Rameau edition for its importance in "awakening" Rameau from his slumber in the libraries, he implicitly praises himself. This high praise for the editors of the *Œuvres complètes*—Dukas goes on to say that the quality of the edition does great honor to the editors—appeared in 1901, only a year before Dukas's edition of *Les Indes galantes* appeared as the seventh volume.

Intentionally or not, all Dukas's efforts served to put his own musical style in comparison with Rameau's. His name was associated with a major work in the *Œuvres complètes*, and his advocacy of Rameau's musical aesthetic were well known by the early 1900s. These points played into how critics saw Dukas's own music. Dukas's opera, *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* (1907), for example, was viewed by some critics as being not only a rejection of Wagnerism but—at least by one critic—as a return to the Classical French methods of composition exemplified by Rameau.[35]

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[34] *Revue hebdomadaire*, May 1901. Reprinted in *Les Écrits de Paul Dukas sur la musique*, 544–45. "Depuis longtemps, Rameau dormait dans la poussière de nos bibliothèques. Il y dormirait encore si, grâce à l'initiative de la maison A Durand et fils, son œuvre ne reparaissait, peu à peu, dans une édition luxueuse et reconstituée, cette fois, d'après les documents originaux révisés selon la méthode critique la plus scrupuleuse."

[35] The critic in question is Henri de Busne, who compared Dukas's opera to Rameau's works. *Le Mercure musical*, 15 May 1907, 465–71.

Debussy's association with Rameau, although more overt, was similar in nature to Dukas's. Debussy's music criticism is filled with references to the eighteenth-century composer, and, in particular, to the innate "Frenchness" of his musical style. As we saw in Chapter 3, Debussy believed that Gluck had led French music away from its true path, which had culminated with Rameau.[36] Gluck had, in effect, interrupted French music history entirely. Everything following him was to some extent Germanic—he had, Debussy believed, paved the way for Wagner's eventual domination of musical (particularly operatic) culture. In reviewing the 1908 production of *Hippolyte et Aricie* at the Opéra, Debussy made this point explicit:

> Marie Antoinette, an Austrian through and through (something for which she had to pay in the end), imposed Gluck upon the French taste; as a result our traditions were led astray, our desire for clarity drowned, and having gone through Meyerbeer, we ended up, naturally enough, with Richard Wagner.[37]

This perspective has much in common with d'Indy's historical narrative, but while d'Indy believed that French musical styles transferred to Germany (leading to a "French" Wagner), Debussy viewed Rameau as the last in a line of truly French composers, those uncorrupted by Germanic influence. "We have," Debussy reported in 1903:

> a purely French tradition in the works of Rameau. They combine a charming and delicate tenderness with precise tones and strict declamation in the recitatives—none of that affected German pomp…. At the same time one is forced to admit that French music has, for too long, followed

[36] Debussy's interest in Rameau's music has been explored by a number of scholars, most recently Anya Suschitzky, in "Debussy's Rameau: French Music and Its Others," *Musical Quarterly* 86 (2002): 398–448. Suschitzky includes in this article a brief historiographical survey of previous scholarship on the material (402–403). Another major source on this subject is Dieter Winzer, *Claude Debussy und die französische musikalische Tradition* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1981).

[37] *Le Figaro*, 8 May 1908. Reprinted in *Debussy on Music*, 229.

> paths that definitely lead away from this clearness of expression, this conciseness and precision of form, both of which are the very qualities peculiar to French genius.[38]

Debussy clearly believed his own music to be a return to this lost "French" style, a restoration of the aesthetic values—clarity, concision, and formal precision—that Rameau represented.[39]

These connections between Rameau and *fin-de-siècle* composers were not lost on contemporary critics—connections that the *Œuvres complètes* were crucial in creating and maintaining. After pointing out the efforts of both d'Indy and Debussy to bring Rameau's music to light, Jean Chantavoine sarcastically wrote in *Le Courrier musical* that:

> under the combined authority of d'Indy and Debussy, *Scholistes* and *Pelléastes* communed in Rameau. D'Indy and Debussy having collaborated on the new Rameau edition, admiration for Rameau became an article of faith for both *d'indyisme* and *Debussysme*. One could not fully admire either of these two artists without encompassing Rameau in the same admiration. A strange solidarity has been created between *Castor et Pollux*, *Fervaal*, and *Pelléas*: some "informed" people maintain that *Fervaal* resulted directly from *Castor* or *Zoroastre*, and if you ask them what led to this opinion, they can only tell you: "I find…" which means "I have heard it said," even when one pronounces it with the air of saying "It is obvious, and you are a brute for not having perceived it." Other people, no less "informed," connect *Pelléas et Mélisande* with *Hippolyte et Aricie*.[40]

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[38] *Gil blas*, 2 February 1903. Reprinted in translation in *Debussy on Music*, 112.

[39] Suschitzky has argued persuasively that Debussy set up the older composer as a kind of "panacea against Wagnerism," a musical solution to the problem of mitigating Wagner's influence on his music. Suschitzky, "Debussy's Rameau," 403.

[40] *Le Courrier musical*, 15 May 1908. "sous l'autorité convergente de MM. d'Indy et Debussy, *Scholistes* et *Pelléastes* communièrent en Rameau. MM. d'Indy et Debussy ayant collaboré à l'édition nouvelle de Rameau, l'admiration de Rameau devint un collaire [*sic*] de la foi dans le *d'indyisme* et dans le *Debussysme*. On ne pouvait admirer intégralement l'on ou l'autre de ces deux artistes sans englober Rameau dans la même admiration. Une solidarité étrange s'établissait entre *Castor et Pollux, Fervaal* et *Pelléas* : des gens 'avertis' vous soutenaient que *Fervaal* est issu directement de *Castor* ou de *Zoroastre*, et si vous leur demandiez de motiver cette opinion, ils se bornaient à vous dire : 'Je trouve…' ce qui signifie:

Although Chantavoine evidently found no evidence of Rameau's musical style in the operas of either d'Indy or Debussy (nor, presumably, in Dukas), it is clear that many critics and audience members did, and were keen to trace modern French music back to its eighteenth-century roots.

Central to the historical narratives created by d'Indy, Dukas, and Debussy (and their critics) was the concept of Rameau's innate "Frenchness." This inscription of national identity was the driving force behind the *Œuvres complètes,* for example, turning the project from being a purely archival enterprise into a nationalist task. Rameau became around 1900 a figurehead of the French musical past, demonstrating as no other composer could do the glories of *ancien régime* opera and culture.[41] Lully was too Italian, and Gluck too German, to serve in this capacity. Not surprisingly, then, reinforcing Rameau's French identity was a major focus of *fin-de-siècle* descriptions of the composer and his works.

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'Je l'ai entendu dire,' même quand on le prononce avec l'air de dire: 'C'est évident, et il faut que vous soyez une brute pour ne pas vous en apercevoir.' D'autres gens, non moins 'avertis' assimilaient avec la même assurance *Pelléas et Mélisande* à *Hippolyte et Aricie*."

[41] A number of scholars have noted the importance of Rameau's French identity to *fin-de-siècle* narratives of music history. Charles B. Paul, for example, noted Rameau's importance to d'Indy's ideas of music history, pointing out that after the French loss in the Franco-Prussian war, Rameau "was flung into the enemy's face to bolster one's courage and one's faith in the national destiny of France." Paul also provides some historical information on this perspective, tracing the idea back to Cuthbert Girdlestone's 1957 biography of the composer. Charles B. Paul, "Rameau, d'Indy, and French Nationalism," *Musical Quarterly* 58 (1972), 46. This topic is also addressed in Katherine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past: Early Music in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

**Rameau's "Frenchness"; or, The "Querelle" Revisited**

The clear subtext behind the *fin-de-siècle* revival of Rameau's music, particularly his operas, was clearly that any praise directed at the composer was also praise for the nation that had produced his genius. In his brief 1876 Rameau biography, Arthur Pougin stated unequivocally: "Outside of all comparison, and judging Rameau from an absolute point of view, it is only fair to say that such an artist gives eternal glory to his fatherland."[42] Pougin's text was published to coincide with the 1876 Rameau festival in Dijon, the composer's birthplace.[43] In Paris, this event sparked great interest in the composer through the daily reports in both specialist and general newspapers, as well as musical periodicals. The central concept of this festival was not only the celebration of a great composer, but of a great *French* composer. As Ellis points out, Rameau was "ammunition with which to argue that the widely perceived gap between the musical richness of Germany and that of France was overstated."[44]

Rameau's Frenchness continued to be a major focus for critics and audiences. Only a few years after the 1876 festival, the preface to the Michaëlis piano/vocal score of *Castor et Pollux* (1878/79) urged readers not to forget that "Rameau's glory is an eminently French glory."[45] In a 1905 article in *Musica* on Rameau's life, the critic

[42] Arthur Pougin, *Rameau: Essai sur sa vie et ses œuvres* (Paris: Decaux, 1876), 118. "En dehors de toute comparaison, et pour juger Rameau à un point de vue absolu, il n'est que juste de déclarer qu'un tel artiste fait la gloire éternelle de sa patrie."

[43] On the 1876 festivities in Dijon, see Katharine Ellis, "Rameau in Late Nineteenth-Century Dijon: Memorial, Festival, Fiasco," in *French Music, Culture, and National Identity, 1870–1939*, ed. Barbara L. Kelly (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2008): 197–214.

[44] Ellis, "Rameau in Late Nineteenth-Century Dijon," 198.

[45] Quoted in Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past*, 131–32. "N'oublions pas que la gloire de Rameau est une gloire éminemment française…"

Gustave Bret expressed a similar sentiment, suggesting that Rameau (like Debussy at the current moment) represented the best of French music: "The deeper one delves into Rameau's art, the more one becomes convinced that one must return to him to recover, in all its grace, clarity, and truth, the very essence of French genius."[46] This pure French pedigree set Rameau apart from the composers who dominated Parisian opera houses before and after him—Jean-Baptiste Lully and Gluck—and represented for some critics a golden age of French opera untouched by foreign musical styles. This was true for Jullien, who wrote in 1894 that Rameau, an "outstanding musician, one of the greatest of any nation," was "readily neglected, perhaps because he is French, and gets crushed between the Italian Lully and the German Gluck."[47] Jullien went on to suggest that Gluck's "admirable" music was modeled entirely on Rameau's:

> Rameau…moved dramatic music after Lully so far forward, created such progress for the *tragédie lyrique* from the triple point of view of the accuracy of the expression, the rapidity of the declamation, and the variety of the orchestra, that Gluck could only study and imitate him in order to create his admirable masterworks. Rameau, in a word, was in every respect the model and inspiration for Gluck, who too easily supplanted him in the admiration of the crowd, because without Rameau the author of *Alceste* would have perhaps remained the Italian composer, as he was in the beginning, and simply the author of *Siface* and *Fedra*.[48]

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[46] *Musica*, March 1905. "Plus l'on se pénètre de l'art de Rameau, et plus l'on arrive à se convaincre qu'il faut remonter jusqu'à lui pour retrouver, dans toute sa grâce, dans toute sa clarté, dans toute sa vérité, l'essence même du génie français."

[47] Jullien, *Musique*, 122. " à ce musicien hors ligne, l'un des plus grands de tous les pays" ; "qu'on néglige volontiers, peut-être parce qu'il est Français, et qu'on écrase entre l'Italien Lulli et l'Allemand Gluck…" Jullien reprinted the latter statement wholesale in his 1908 review of *Hippolyte et Aricie* in the *Journal des débats* (17 May 1908).

[48] Jullien, *Musique*, 122. "Rameau…a fait faire un tel pas à la musique dramatique après Lulli, a tellement fait progresser la tragédie lyrique au triple point de vue de la justesse de l'expression, de la rapidité de la déclamation et de la variété de l'orchestre, que Gluck n'eut qu'à l'étudier et à l'imiter pour créer ses admirables chefs-d'œuvre. Rameau, en un mot, fut sur tous les points le modèle et l'inspirateur de Gluck, qui l'a trop facilement supplanté dans l'admiration de la foule, car sans Rameau l'auteur d'*Alceste* serait peut-être resté le compositeur italien du début, et simplement l'auteur de *Siface* et de *la Fedra*." Jullien

Here Jullien positions Rameau directly against Italian musical styles, suggesting that only Rameau's French influence allowed Gluck to come into his own. Rameau thus became for many critics, like Jullien, a symbol of the struggle (and triumph) of French musical styles against Italian and German influence. Yet as important as Rameau's status as French by birth was for *fin-de-siècle* critics, the extent of his immanent "Frenchness" went much further. Being born in France was clearly a virtue, but it was by nature passive—Rameau did not choose this fate for himself. Almost more important was the fact that Rameau had taken a strong stand for French musical values in one of the most heated debates in music history: the "Querelle des bouffons." [49]

For *fin-de-siècle* critics and audiences in France, this "quarrel" essentially boiled down into a conflict between French and Italian (and by extrapoliaton: foreign) musical styles. On one side of the debate was Rameau, who epitomized the values of the classical French *tragédie lyrique*. On the other side were Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Melchior Grimm, and the Encyclopedists, all of whom advocated embracing the Italian style of opera (and, in particular, the "natural" quality of its melody). This battle initially raged in Paris from 1752 to 1754, but it was well remembered by early twentieth-century critics. Selected texts related to the Querelle were published, for example, in Henri de Curzon's 1914 "source readings," *La Musique*.[50]

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reprinted this entire paragraph in his 1908 review of *Hippolyte et Aricie* in the *Journal des débats* (17 May 1908).

[49] For general sources on the Querelle, see Noël Boyer, *La Guerre des Bouffons et la musique française* (Paris: Éditions de la Nouvelle France, 1945); and Arnold M. Whittall, "La Querelle des Bouffons" (Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, 1964).

[50] Henri de Curzon, ed., *La Musique : textes choisis et commentés* (Paris: Plon, 1914). Curzon included a chapter on the Querelle, featuring texts from Rameau, Grimm, and Rousseau.

Louis Laloy, for example, referred to the Querelle repeatedly in his 1908 Rameau biography, always proclaiming the merits of Rameau's French style over any Italian. In response to the typical complaint about the lack of melody in Rameau's works (as opposed to Italian opera), for example, Laloy indignantly wrote that "no Italian of any era ever drew out a melody with such a firm hand, carried it out with this assurance, or foregrounded it with this decisiveness."[51] A bit later, Laloy continued: "With the Italians, it [melody] seeks only to please, to astonish, or to divert; with Rameau, there is always a reason: it is an image, not a game."[52] Like his close friend Debussy, Laloy seems to have felt that Rameau represented the apex of France's musical history, and that French music was too readily mislead by the efforts of composers such as Gluck, who synthesized Italian musical styles with the *tragédie lyrique*.

Lionel de la Laurencie, in his 1926 Rameau biography, was more balanced in his view of the Querelle. He admitted that the pro-Italian position of the Encyclopedists

> set out with great foresight the aesthetic foundations of the future *drame lyrique*. They herald Grétry, Gluck, and even Richard Wagner; they express the new needs of dramatic art that worked quietly on the spirit in the eighteenth century, needs that the Italian works of the *bouffons* partially satisfied.[53]

[51] Laloy, *Rameau*, 183. "Aucun Italien, à aucun époque, n'a tracé la mélodie d'une main aussi ferme, ne l'a conduite avec cette assurance, ne l'a mise au premier plan avec cette décision."

[52] Laloy, *Rameau*, 184. "Chez les Italiens, elle [la mélodie] ne cherche qu'à plaire, à étonner ou à divertir ; chez Rameau, elle a toujours un sens : c'est une image, non un jeu."

[53] Lionel de la Laurencie, *Rameau: Biographie critique* (Pairs: Laurens, 1926), 35. "ils jettent, avec une grande clairvoyance, les bases de l'esthétique du futur drame lyrique. Ils annoncent Grétry, Gluck et même Richard Wagner ; ils expriment les besoins nouveaux d'art dramatique qui sourdement travaillaient les esprits au XVIIIe siècle, besoins auxquels les pièces italiennes des bouffons apportaient une satisfaction partielle."

Despite this foresight in determining the aesthetic trends of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, de la Laurencie allowed that Rousseau, Grimm, and the Encyclopedists did not really understand instrumental music, a fact that negatively disposed them towards Rameau's works, which included numerous "symphonies." "They all," de la Laurencie noted, "find that there is too much music in French opera."[54] The critic continued by mitigating somewhat the accusations against Rameau, discrediting Grimm and Rousseau and suggesting that the position of the Encyclopedists was more balanced:

> Grimm, that German disguised as a Parisian, attacked him [Rameau] without measure, scoffing at him even after his death, so great was his [Grimm's] hatred for everything that characterizes the French spirit; whereas Rousseau, excessive and passionate, combined the worst errors with remarks of rare insight; [Denis] Diderot and [Jean le Rond] d'Alembert [two of the Encyclopedists] are in general more evenhanded and moderate in their criticism.[55]

Here Grimm is dismissed outright as "German," and as an enemy of all things truly French in character. Rousseau's qualifications were more solid, but de la Laurencie found his criticism uneven in quality. Only the Encyclopedists Diderot and d'Alembert were fair in their assessments of eighteenth-century music, and, though they had sought operatic reforms from the *tragédie lyrique* tradition, they had at least appreciated Rameau's eminently French style to a certain degree.

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[54] De la Laurience, *Rameau*, 36. "Tous trouvent qu'il y a trop de musique dans l'opéra français."

[55] De la Lauriencie, *Rameau*, 36. "Grimm, cet Allemand déguisé en Parisien, l'attaque sans mesure, et le bafoue après sa mort, tant est grande sa haine pour tout ce qui caractérise l'esprit français, alors que Rousseau, excessif et passionné, associe les pires erreurs à des remarques d'une rare pénétration, Diderot et d'Alembert mettent en général plus d'équité et de modération dans leur critiques. … Duré de l'esprit historique que ne possédaient ni Grimm, ni Rousseau, il situe très exactement Rameau dans l'évolution de l'art et ne méconnaît point les qualités de la musique française."

For most *Ramiste* critics, however, Rousseau bore the brunt of the responsibility for the Querelle.[56] Grimm was a foreigner, and his antipathy for French music was at least expected, if not condoned. Rousseau, however, was French (by language if not by birth—he was Swiss); consequently, his betrayal of French musical values was more difficult to explain, or even tolerate. Henri Lavoix began his 1891 book *La Musique française* with the following passage:

> If some wit had the singular idea to maintain the paradox that there was no French literature, poetry, painting, or sculpture, the idea would be laughable and would not find a single supporter; but if he added music, it would be entirely different: everyone could, despite contradicting history and without appearing too ridiculous, maintain that French music does not exist, that it has never existed, and that it never will exist. J.-J. Rousseau, with all the authority of genius, simply stated the axiom that the French had no music and could not have it; a good number of disciples have religiously taken in the master's words, and it is still an article of faith for many dilettantes.[57]

Lavoix then spends the remaider of the book attempting to disprove Rousseau's unpatriotic assertion. Such efforts were fairly common at the *fin de siècle*, as attempts to demonstrate the greatness of France's musical history gained momentum. In 1899, the critic and musicologist Arthur Pougin (the author of an influential 1876 Rameau biography) began a 25-part article in *Le Ménestrel* entitled "Jean-Jacques Rousseau

[56] See Pierre Lasserre's condemnation of Rousseau as the herald of the nineteenth-century musical "invasion" by Italy and Germany, in *L'Esprit de la musique française*, 114–15.

[57] Henri Lavoix, *La Musique français* (Paris: Quantin, 1891), 5. "S'il prenait à quelque homme d'esprit la pensée singulière de soutenir ce paradoxe qu'il n'existe ni littérature, ni poésie, ni peinture, ni sculpture françaises, l'idée ferait sourire et ne trouverait pas un adepte ; mais s'il agit de musique, il en est tout autrement : chacun peut, malgré les démentis de l'histoire et sans paraître trop ridicule, soutenir que la musique française n'existe pas, qu'elle n'a jamais existé et qu'elle n'existera jamais. J.-J. Rousseau, avec toute l'autorité du génie, a posé simplement cet axiome que les Français n'avaient pas de musique et n'en pouvaient avoir ; bon nombre de disciples ont recueilli religieusement la parole du maître et elle est encore article de foi pour bien des dilettantes."

musician."[58] Despite this article's focus on Rousseau, Pougin never lost an opportunity to compare the philosopher unfavorably to Rameau. After citing a passage in which Rousseau praises his own skills as a composer, for example, Pougin writes:

> We see what a lofty idea Rousseau had of his talents as a composer. It is like this every time he finds a reason to discuss his music, and he found them often. … But what is truly strange and proves to be a true aberration of spirit in the great man is the jealousy that he so naively and sincerely attributes to Rameau. Does one see the author of *Castor et Pollux* afraid of a rivalry with the author of *Les Muses galantes*?
> …
> Rousseau claims to give us new proof of Rameau's terrible jealousy—jealousy which, Rousseau did not understand, was nothing but the natural distain of a great artist for his [Rousseau's] truly presumptuous musical pretentions.
> …
> Rousseau the equal of Rameau—it is enough to make one smile.[59]

Pougin was no kinder to Rousseau in terms of his aesthetic judgments of Rameau; after a description of one of Rousseau's pamphlets in the Querelle, Pougin opined that "Rousseau sufficiently proved…that he understood nothing of the admirable genius of the author of *Castor et Pollux*, and that he did not know how to do him justice."[60] In the

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[58] This series of articles began on 24 September 1899 and continued (with some brief interruptions) until 15 March 1900. The same material was published the following year as a monograph of the same title (Paris: Fischbacher, 1901).

[59] *Le Ménestrel*, 22 October 1899. "On voit quelle haute idée Rousseau avait de ses talents de compositeur. Il en est ainsi toutes les fois qu'il trouve l'occasion de parler de sa musique, et il la trouve souvent. … Mais ce qui est vraiment curieux, et ce qui prouve une véritable aberration d'esprit chez ce grand homme, c'est la jalousie qu'il attribue si naïvement et si sincèrement à Rameau. Voit-on l'auteur de *Castor et Pollux* redoutant la rivalité de l'auteur des *Muses galantes* ? …
… Rousseau prétend nous donner une nouvelle preuve de la terrible jalousie de Rameau, jalousie qui, Rousseau ne le comprend pas, n'est autre chose que le dédain naturel d'un tel artiste pour ses prétentions musicales vraiment outrecuidantes.
…
Rousseau l'égal de Rameau, cela peut faire sourire."

[60] *Le Ménestrel*, 11 February 1900. The pamphlet in question is Rousseau's *Examen de deux principes avancés par M. Rameau dans sa brochure intitulée : Erreurs sur la musique dans l'Encyclopedie*. "Rousseau prouvait suffisamment, des cet écrit, qu'il ne comprenait rien à l'admirable génie de l'auteur de *Castor et Pollux* et qu'il ne savait pas lui rendre justice."

final part of his article, Pougin pronounced his judgment on Rousseau as a musician: "He believed wrongly that he could, with only the aid of a superficial study, understand the rules and set the precepts of an art that requires constant practice in order to master it, a long experience and the help of reason applied to sensitivity."[61]

For Pougin, as for other critics, Rousseau's chief failing was that he derided French musical styles, and Rameau in particular. Pougin found Rousseau's rejection of French music to be utterly ridiculous:

> If we want to examine this famous *Lettre* [*sur la musique*], we will see that Rousseau goes to great lengths to try and prove that French music is detestable, and that it cannot and will never not be so, because the French language is completely hostile to music. … He collects on this subject a crowd of alleged examples, the most bizarre reasons, and poses as axioms a number of sentences that…have no basis and can do nothing today but make us smile.[62]

Lionel de la Laurencie expressed similar sentiments in his 1905 monograph *Le Goût musical en France*. In his discussion of Rousseau's *Lettre sur la musique*, he expressed shock at the philosopher's assessments:

> For Rousseau, the French, whose language is flat and deprived of accents, gave proof of the most pitiable taste in their "ariettas" and in their recitative, full of "noisy and shrill intonations." "There is," he writes, "neither meter nor melody in French music, because the language is not sensitive to them; French singing is nothing but a continual barking, unbearable to any ear not warned; the harmony in it is crude, without

[61] *Le Ménestrel*, 25 March 1900. "il a cru à tort qu'il pourrait, avec la seule aide d'une étude toute superficielle, faire connaître les règles et fixer les préceptes d'un art dont on ne peut se rendre maître que par une pratique constante, une longue expérience et le secours du raisonnement appliqué à la sensibilité."

[62] *Le Ménestrel*, 21 January 1900. "Si nous voulons examiner cette fameuse *Lettre*, nous y voyons que Rousseau se donne beaucoup de peine pour essayer prouver que la musique française est détestable et qu'elle ne peut et ne pourra jamais être telle, parce que la lange française est radicalement hostile à la musique…. Il accumule à ce sujet une foule de prétendus exemples, de raisons des plus bizarres, et pose en axiomes quantité de sentences qui… ne reposent sur aucun fondement et ne peuvent aujourd'hui que nous faire sourire."

> expression…; French arias are not arias; French recitative is not at all recitative. Thus I conclude that the French have no music, and cannot have it, or that, if they ever have one, it will be too bad for them." Rousseau dared to utter such blasphemies twenty years after *Castor et Pollux*! He treated Rameau cavalierly.…[63]

De la Lauriencie paints Rousseau as an enemy of all things French; significantly, the critic felt he only needed to offer *Castor et Pollux* as an reference to his readers in order to conclusively demonstrate the falsity of Rousseau's claims. For critics of this mindset, Rousseau represented, despite his importance to cultural history, a challenge to French musical values—the same values that were being celebrated at the *fin de siècle* through monuments like the Rameau *Œuvres complètes* and by composers such as Debussy and Dukas.

Rousseau's bicentenary in 1912 prompted two issues of the *S.I.M. Revue musicale* (June and July) mostly dedicated to the music and aesthetics of the philosopher, featuring articles by musicologists Paul-Marie Masson, Lionel de la Laurencie, and Julien Tiersot, among others. On 23 June, the Opéra-Comique even presented Rousseau's *Le Devin du village* under Tiersot's direction as part of a Rousseau festival. Even with this newfound cultural celebration of Rousseau, however, critics could not readily embrace his musical judgments. For Masson, in particular, Rousseau's importance was a complex issue. He was, undoubtedly, a significant figure in French musical history, but his systematic

[63] De la Laurencie, *Le Goût musical en France* (Paris: Joanin, 1905), 173. "Pour Rousseau, les Français, dont la langue est plate et dépourvue d'accents, font preuve du goût le plus pitoyable dans leurs 'ariettes' et dans leur récitatif, plein de 'bruyantes et criardes intonations.' 'Il n'y a, écrit-il, ni mesure, ni mélodie dans la musique française, parce que la langue n'en est pas susceptible ; le chant français n'est qu'un aboiement continuel, insupportable à toutes oreille non prévenue ; l'harmonie en est brute, sans expression…; les airs français ne sont pas des airs ; le récitatif français n'est point du récitatif. D'où je conclus que les Français n'ont point de musique et n'en peuvent avoir, ou que, si jamais ils en ont une, ce sera tant pis pour eux.' Rousseau osait proférer de tels blasphèmes vingt ans après *Castor et Pollux* ! Il traitait Rameau cavalièrement…."

opposition to all things French was troubling. Nevertheless, Masson felt that Rousseau was worth of great respect, despite his flaws:

> Here is why, despite his errors and his deficiencies, Rousseau played such a large role in the history of our music: he represents the secret hopes of his time. He speaks of music with a new language, as if he speaks of God or of love; but he addressed himself to those who were inclined to listen. One accuses him of not being French: that one should refuse the title of "French" to all those who have enthusiastically followed him in his adventurous dream. Is it really to understand France, or even to love it, to claim to define it once and for all? … [By Rousseau's passion] he separated himself cleanly from Rameau in order to turn in an entirely new direction, where he encounters Gluck, and where Berlioz would appear. Whatever one might think of his attitude and his inclinations, and one has the right to treat his errors harshly, it would be unjust not to see in him, in the realm of music as in many others, one of the most fruitful *remueurs d'idées* who ever existed.[64]

Significantly, Masson felt that Rousseau was a point of transition in French music history. It was he who had started down the path that led to Gluck, Berlioz, and, at least for some critics, an ultimate Italianization of French music in the nineteenth century.

The young music scholar Jean Chantavoine clearly felt that a desire to shake off the long-term results of the Querelle was a major catalyst for Rameau's rediscovered popularity in the early twentieth century:

[64] *S.I.M. Revue musical*, July 1912, 32. "Voilà pourquoi, malgré ses erreurs et ses insuffisances, Rousseau a joué un si grand rôle dans l'histoire de notre musique : c'est qu'il représente les secrète aspirations de son temps. Il parle de la musique avec un langage nouveau, comme lorsqu'il parle le Dieu ou de l'amour ; mais il s'adresse à des âmes disposées à l'entendre. On l'accuse de n'être pas Français : qu'on refuse donc le nom de Français à tous ceux qui l'ont suivi avec enthousiasme dans sa rêverie aventureuse. Est-ce bien comprendre la France, ou même bien l'aimer, que de prétendre la définir tout entière une fois pour toutes ? … [By his passion] il se sépare nettement de Rameau pour s'orienter dans une direction tout autre, où il rencontre Gluck, et où apparaîtra Berlioz. Quoi qu'on puisse penser de son attitude et de ses tendances, bien qu'on ait le droit d'être sévère pour ses erreurs, il serait injuste de ne pas voir en lui, dans le domaine de la musique comme dans beaucoup d'autres, un des plus féconds remueurs d'idées qui aient jamais existé."

> there is certainly a share of artistic chauvinism in this new Rameau cult, and also a share of anti-Encyclopedist spirit. One admires Jean-Philippe Rameau for being a "hometown" musician; one also admires him for having been little appreciated by Rousseau and the Encyclopedists, who many people have not forgiven for their influence on the modern spirit.[65]

According to Chantavoine, the fact that Rameau had traditionally been positioned against Rousseau was a major point in the composer's favor. The critic—who in this article expressed his preference for Gluck over Rameau—argued that audiences appreciated Rameau only for his French identity, not for his music. Furthermore, Chantavoine suggested that Rousseau and the Encyclopedists had been blamed by some for the current state of affairs—which is to say, for the perceived foreign influence on modern French musical culture. Gluck, irrevocably tied to this Encyclopedist tradition, was thus positioned to oppose Rameau's music.

A tension between the respective evaluations of Gluck and Rameau is prevalent in *fin-de-siècle* music criticism, particularly when critics discussed the latter composer; such comparison is in clear evidence, for example, in the Rameau biographies of de la Laurencie and Laloy. As I discuss in detail in Chapter 3, Gluck had since the late nineteenth century been set up as a musical reformer, the messianic figure called for by the Encyclopedists who could unite the best aspects of the French and Italian musical styles. For some, like Debussy, this had changed the course of French music history, and not for the better. For others, like Chantavoine, Gluck had modernized the antiquated *tragédie lyrqiue* tradition, and ensured the continued influence of French musical styles.

[65] *Le Courrier musical*, 15 May 1908. "il entra certainement dans ce culte nouveau de Rameau une part de chauvinisme artistique, et une part aussi d'esprit antiencyclopédiste. On admira Jean-Philippe Rameau d'être un musicien de 'chez nous'; on l'admira aussi d'avoir été peu apprécié par Rousseau et les Encyclopédistes, à qui beaucoup de gens ne pardonnent par leur influence sur l'esprit moderne."

In either case, Rameau was to an extent positioned in opposition to Gluck. In that scenario, Rameau had ultimately been rejected by the Encyclopedists and Rousseau, while Gluck had embodied their "Italianate" vision of French music.

Only a few critics, particularly Saint-Saëns, seemed immune to the temptation to choose sides between Gluck and Rameau. This refusal is not particularly surprising, given his campaigning for both candidates—he had, after all, written extensively in favor of both Rameau and Gluck, and had a major role in both the Rameau *Œuvres complètes* and the Pelletan Edition of Gluck's operas. Rather than casting one composer as more representative of "French" musical values than the other, in his *Harmonie et mélodie* (1885) Saint-Saëns united them under the same banner:

> Let us note in passing that France is the chosen land of opera. It has not been easy to persuade her that realistic stage action, good declamation, and fine verses were nothing when compared to a graceful tune, decked out with a pedal point like an ostrich feather on a hat; it has not been easy to succeed in destroying the work begun by Rameau and completed by Gluck, in the midst of a fierce struggle; because the struggle was already going on and, essentially, it was the same struggle we are seeing now. Pergolesi was set against Rameau and Piccinni against Gluck. The enemies of these great men were using the weapon that is still being wielded by their descendants: "melody." When faced with the highest levels of reasoning or with the most self-evident beauties, they always countered with "melody." … For a hundred and fifty years, "melody" has been the touchstone of musical criticism.[66]

Here Rameau and Gluck both represent the struggle of dramatic verity (read: "French opera") against partisans of pure "melody" (Italian opera). Saint-Saëns then goes on—shockingly—to compare the historic struggles of Rameau and Gluck against those

[66] Reprinted in *Camille Saint-Saëns on Music and Musicians*, ed. and trans. Roger Nichols (Oxford and New York : Oxford University Press, 2008), 104.

partisans of Italianate melody to those faced by Richard Wagner at the *fin de siècle*.[67] Whereas more xenophobic critics were content with separating music into two categories—French and "foreign"—Saint-Saëns allied French and German musical traditions against Italian music, thus connecting Rameau and Gluck rather than setting them in opposition.

Most critics, however, were less all-embracing in their view of French operatic traditions, and many *Ramistes* felt compelled to denigrate Gluck's operas. In 1903, during a performance of Rameau's *La Guirlande* at the Schola Cantorum, for example, Debussy was (supposedly) moved to shout: "Vive Rameau! A bas Gluck!" The connection of these ideas is telling; Debussy seems to suggest that one cannot appreciate both composers simultaneously. The same idea was expressed by Charles Malherbe in 1908, as *Hippolyte et Aricie* was being revived at the Opéra: "Once again one opposes the giant Gluck, no longer to Piccini *le petit*, as in the past, but to Rameau *le grand*; one must declare oneself a Gluckiste or a Ramiste, and the ink begins to flow anew for or against the god of your choice."[68] Like Debussy, Malherbe felt that Gluck and Rameau were diametrically opposed, aesthetically speaking. A new incarnation of the perennial battle between French and Italian musical style had appeared, this time with Rameau as the figurehead for purely French music, and with Gluck as the Italianate composer sought by Rousseau. For these critics, then, reviving Rameau and his music not only offered up an example of a great French composer; it also meant revisiting the Querelle, giving critics

[67] Pierre Lasserre also linked Rameau's operas to Wagner's on several occasions in his *L'Esprit de la musique française, de Rameau à l'invasion wagnérienne* (Paris: Payot, 1917), the second chapter of which is dedicated to Rameau.

[68] *Le Courrier musical*, 15 May 1908. "On opposera de nouveau le géant Gluck non plus à Piccini le petit, comme autrefois, mais à Rameau le grand ; il faudra se déclarer Gluckiste ou Ramiste, et les flots d'encre recommenceront à couler pour ou contre le dieu de son choix."

an opportunity to argue anew for the glories of French opera over foreign styles. This effort to demonstrate the greatness of purely French music was a driving force in the revival and reception of *Hippolyte et Aricie* at the Opéra in 1908.

**Rameau at the Opéra**

"It cannot be hoped that one should ever hear *Castor et Pollux*, *Dardanus*, or *Zoroastre* at the Opéra," Félix Clément lamented in 1885.[69] He believed that, although Rameau's operas were great musical works, they were too antiquated for modern audiences. The style of the *tragédie lyrique* (at least pre-Gluck) was too disconnected from both nineteenth-century French musical styles like *grand opéra* and from post-Wagnerian concepts of the music drama. By 1908, however, Rameau's image was somewhat rehabilitated. After more than a decade of the successful productions of Gluck's music for modern French audiences, fairly successful versions of Rameau's operas (in whole or in part) in concerts, and the publicity generated by the Rameau *Œuvres complètes*, the administrators at the Opéra felt confident enough in his box-office appeal of the Operatic Museum to take a chance on Rameau. Furthermore, Vincent d'Indy conducted a production of *Dardanus* in Dijon in 1907, and Charles Bordes (founder of the Schola Cantorum) had directed a production of *Castor et Pollux* in Montpellier in early 1908—events noted with interest in the Parisian press.[70]

[69] Clément, *Histoire de la musique*, 521. "Il ne faut pas espérer qu'on entende jamais à l'Opéra *Castor et Pollux*, *Dardanus* ou *Zoroastre*."

[70] See for example, the reviews of both productions in *Le Courrier musical*, 1 January 1908 (*Dardanus*) and 1 February 1908 (*Castor et Pollux*).

*Hippolyte et Aricie* was a somewhat symbolic choice for the Opéra's production; its first appearance there in 1733, was, as we have seen, generally viewed at the *fin de siècle* as one of the most significant moments in French music history. In choosing the same work, the Opéra suggested a triumphal return for Rameau—the musicologist Henri Quittard referred to the 1908 production as an "apotheosis of the old master."[71] It was also chosen to be a triumphal entry on the Opéra stage for the theater's new directors, André Messager and Leimistin Broussan, who chose *Hippolyte et Aricie* to be their first production. Despite successful precedents, this was a risky move. Georges Pioche, for example, pointed out in *Musica* that "Messager and Broussan risked much in reviving *Hippolyte et Aricie*, much more than in staging a new work," because of the specific pitfalls of presenting Classical operas to a modern audience.[72]

In contrast to the productions of Gluck's works at the Opéra-Comique and, less often, at the Opéra, there was little attempt at staging *Hippolyte et Aricie* in a "modern" fashion. As with other aspects of the production, the prevailing attitude seems to have been a historical one. As Figures 4.1 and 4.2 demonstrate, the costumes were aimed at a sort of realistic antiquity—though, it is worth noting, they were in no way aimed at replication the costuming from Rameau's time. The sets were seldom the topic of discussion from any critics, and periodicals did not routinely reproduce images, as they often did when the staging was considered daring, or particularly impressive, leading one to the conclusion that the sets were in no way remarkable, or in any way "modernized."

[71] *La Revue musicale*, June 1908, 319. "cette apothéose du vieux maître"

[72] *Musica*, June 1908. "MM. Messager et Broussan risquaient beaucoup en remontant *Hippolyte et Aricie*, beaucoup plus qu'en montant une œuvre nouvelle."

These decisions reveal much regarding attitudes towards *Hippolyte et Aricie*, demonstrating the extent to which the work was regarded as a museum piece rather than as a modern opera. Rameau's operas, clearly, formed the centerpiece of the Operatic Museum, and were being venerated and preserved in a manner befitting that status.


**Figure 4.1: Lucienne Bréval as Phèdre in *Hippolyte et Aricie* in 1908. *Musica*, July 1908.**


**Figure 4.2: Jean-François Delmas as Thésée in *Hippolyte et Aricie*, in 1908. *Musica*, July 1908.**

This recognition of Rameau's importance was long overdue in the eyes of many critics. One of the greatest proponents of the Opéra's decision to stage a work by Rameau, not surprisingly, was Jullien. The critic was overjoyed to see *Hippolyte* restored finally to the Parisian stages, and he hoped that this production signaled a new trend:

> I have waited thirty-four years: but, more fortunate than many others, I have seen the hope that I have had since February 1874 realized: "If I could only hear my preferences," I said then, "I would ask to go back as far as Rameau, the greatest French musician, and that one should produce anew one of his masterworks: *Castor et Pollux*, *Hippolyte et Aricie*, or *Dardanus*…" Must I wait as long again to see *Dardanus* or *Castor et Pollux* played once more in Paris?[73]

Other critics were likewise pleased with the Opéra's investment one of the greatest triumphs of France's musical history. This generally favorable outlook on the 1908 production, however, was tinged with some trepidation as to the public's reaction to this Classical masterwork. Fauré, for example, noted a "manifest suspicion" from the audience members at the beginning of the performance. Fauré continued:

> I add quickly that this suspicion did not take too long to dissipate; that, gradually, the opera worked its charm; that—despite the genre, a style that has so long been forgotten that it seemed new again—the beauties of the music, the grandeur of its character, the variety, and the movement that animated it appeared little by little; and that the night's performance ended as a triumph.[74]

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[73] *Journal des débats*, 17 May 1908. "J'aurai donc attendu trente-quatre ans ; mais, plus heureux que bien d'autres, j'aurais vu se réaliser le souhait que je formais dès février 1874…: 'Si je n'écoutais que mes préférences, disais-je alors, je demanderais qu'on remontât jusqu'à Rameau, le plus grand musicien français, et qu'on reprît l'un de ces chefs-d'œuvre : *Castor et Pollux*, *Hippolyte et Aricie* ou *Dardanus*…' Me faudra-t-il attendre encore autant pour voir rejouer à Paris *Dardanus* ou *Castor et Pollux*?"

[74] *Le Figaro*, 18 May 1908. "J'ajoute bien vite que cette méfiance n'a pas tardé à se dissiper ; que, graduellement, le charme la opéré et qu'en dépit d'un genre, d'un style qu'un si long oubli fait paraître nouveaux, les beautés de la musique, la grandeur de son caractère, la variété, le mouvement qui l'animent sont peu à peu apparus, et que la soirée s'est terminée un triomphe."

Fauré believed that the audience, despite its initial hesitancy, was eventually swayed by Rameau's music. Particularly significant here is his point that the music "appeared new again." Like Debussy and others, Fauré seems to interpret a connection between Rameau's music and the aesthetics of French modernity, much as the "Classical" interpretation of Mozart's operas was viewed as more in line with early twentieth-century concepts of musical style (see Chapter 2).

Few critics shared Fauré's unbridled enthusiasm for the 1908 *Hippolyte et Aricie* production, however. Most were torn, caught between an appreciation of Rameau's music and a sense of disconnection from the radically different dramtic style that he represented. Pierre Lalo, the influential music critic for *Le Temps*, encapsulated many of the production's problematic issues in his review:

> Paris is finally giving Rameau the homage that he is due. It is the decisive test, the happy success of which revives the greatest of the masters of our art. One cannot stress the importance too much of such an event…. French music had lost its titles of nobility: the production of *Hippolyte et Aricie* has just given them back.
>
> Because the success surpassed our hopes. It is not that the public did not suffer some surprise in the face of an art so different, in spirit and in style, from the types of art to which it is accustomed. But its surprise is natural, and it would have been impossible fror the public not to experience it. For almost the entire public, music is an art without origins, without evolution, without development, the history of which is lost, and only the most recent music escapes obscurity. …
>
> Yet almost everything in his [Rameau's] art is made to astonish and trouble today's audiences. First, even the conception that he had of musical theater has nothing in common with ours. Our idea of musical theater is entirely Romantic: since Gluck, Romanticism has had a hold on us; an opera is for us a drama, in which the object is to seize, to shake, to move, the soul of the listener; art is entirely directed, set up towards this design; one sacrifices everything in searching for effect, according to Gluck's own words. … With Rameau, the pure and supreme representative of our Classical tradition, the principle of art is entirely different. Emotion, as powerful as it may be, is subjugated to intelligence; reason imposes an ordinance on sensibility. This music brings clarity with

> it; it exudes certainty; a general idea of equilibrium and harmony governs it. Rameau's opera is not a drama, but a *tragédie lyrique*, in the widest meaning of the term, a spectacle of beauty and celebration, where the pathos of the great movements of the soul mix with the peace and grace of *divertissements*, where moments of passion and sadness alternate effortlessly with moments of joy and repose, where an art, a taste, a superior reason can unite diverse forces without sacrificing any element, in order to produce an impression of noble exaltation and beneficent serenity.[75]

Lalo lauded the fact that the Opéra displayed Rameau's music in the Operatic Museum, stressing the "importance" of the production. Yet, even in his lavish praise for Rameau and for the Opéra, Lalo could not help but feel uneasy about the wide gap between "Classical" and "modern" notions of music dramas. Rameau's works were products of a different time, and a different culture, stressing "reason" and "intelligence" over "emotion." As in the rehashing of the Querelle des Bouffons we have seen around this time, once again Rameau is compared to Gluck. In this case, the latter composer represents the "modern" direction in opera, culminating, one assumes, in the modern

[75] *Le Temps*, 19 May 1908. "Paris enfin rend à Rameau l'hommage qui lui est dû. C'est l'épreuve décisive, dont l'heureux succès fait revivre le plus grand des maîtres de notre art. On ne peut estimer trop haut l'importance d'un tel événement…. La musique française avait perdu ses titres : la reprise d'*Hippolyte et Aricie* vient de les lui rendre.

Car le succès a passé notre espérance. Ce n'est pas que le public n'ait ressenti quelque surprise devant un art si différent, par l'esprit et par le style, des sortes d'art auxquelles il est accoutumé. Mais sa surprise est naturelle, et il était impossible qu'il ne l'éprouvât point. … Pour le public presque tout entier, la musique est un art sans origines, sans évolution, sans développement, dont toute l'histoire a été perdue, et dont la période la plus récente échappe seule à l'oubli. …

Presque tout pourtant dans son art est fait pour étonner et troubler le spectateur d'aujourd'hui. D'abord, la conception même qu'il se fait du théâtre musical n'a rien de commun avec la nôtre. Notre idée du théâtre musical est toute romantique : depuis que Gluck est venu, le romantisme nous possède ; un opéra est pour nous un drame, dont l'objet est de saisir, d'ébranler, de bouleverses, l'âme de l'auditeur ; l'art est tout entier dirigé, tendu vers ce dessin ; on y sacrifie tout à la recherche de l'effet, selon les propres paroles de Gluck…. Chez Rameau, pur et suprême représentant de notre tradition classique, le principe de l'art est tout autre. L'émotion, si puissante qu'elle soit, demeure soumise à l'intelligence ; la raison impose une ordonnance à la sensibilité. Cette musique porte la clarté avec elle ; elle répand la certitude ; une idée générale d'équilibre et d'harmonie la gouverne. L'opéra de Rameau n'est pas un drame, mais une tragédie lyrique, au sens le plus ample de ces mots, un spectacle de beauté et de fête où le pathétique des grands mouvements de l'âme mêle à la paix et à la grâce des divertissements, où les moments de passion et de douleur alternent sans effort avec les moments d'allégresse et de repos, où un art, un goût, une raison supérieurs savent unir les forces diverses de la musique, sans sacrifier celles-ci à celles-là, pour produire une impression de noble exaltation et de sérénité bienfaisante."

(Wagnerian) music drama. Rameau, by contrast, is the "pure and supreme representative of our [French] Classical tradition," an aesthetic totally separate from post-Gluck ideas about music drama. Although Lalo ultimately seemed to support Rameau's "Classical" aesthetic, his review was ambivalent regarding what the public's reaction to *Hippolyte* would be. Nevertheless, he ended his review with an exhortation: "Go to Rameau's work. I hope that you will like it; I even hope, if it is necessary, that you will make a bit of an effort to like and understand it; be assured that you will be rewarded for your trouble."[76]

Other critics were not even as cautiously optimistic as Lalo, nor so willing to advise their readers to work harder to understand the opera. The traditionalist critic Louis de Fourcaud, for example, writing in the daily paper *Le Gaulois*, was also caught between appreciating Rameau's music and finding it too "distant," but suggested a different solution:

> Oh! Rameau's music is admirable. This score, almost two hundred years old, demonstrates solidity, a frankness, and a sincerity of expression that one cannot praise too highly. … Only, at the Opéra, in its current [i.e., modern] condition, we are uncomfortable with performing archeology. These continual juxtapositions of tragic forms, cantata forms, and choreographed *divertissements*; this orchestra, very sonorous for its time, infinitely ingenious in its detail, but thin to our ears, and entirely primitive; these plucked or jagged notes from the sour harpsichord, all this comes to us from too far away, with too much wear and tear, and, above all, exhibited in too large a space.
>
> Suppose these five acts were given in a small hall, with an educational view…I believe that we would better understand the historic grandeur, and that we would enjoy in a more intimate setting the charm and the grace of his episodes.[77]

[76] *Le Temps*, 19 May 1908. "Allez donc à l'œuvre de Rameau. Je souhaite que vous l'aimiez; je souhaite même, s'il est nécessaire, que vous fassiez pour l'aimer et la comprendre un peu d'effort; soyez assurés que vous serez payés de votre peine."

[77] *Le Gaulois*, 14 May 1908. "Oh! la musique de Rameau est admirable. Cette partition, presque deux fois centenaire, se révèle d'une solidité, d'une franchise, d'une sincérité d'expression qu'on ne peut trop louer. … Seulement, à l'Opéra, dans les conditions actuelles, nous sommes mal à l'aise pour faire de l'archéologie. Ces juxtapositions continuelles de formes tragiques, de formes de cantates et de formes de

In Fourcaud's view, despite the excellence of the music, Rameau's operas were not well suited to the modern Opéra and its modern audiences. He suggested relegating productions of this kind—by extension, the whole of the Operatic Museum—to smaller halls (as had been done previously at the Schola Cantorum), and labeling the productions as explicitly educational in function. Jullien also found the Opéra to be an unsatisfactory location for *Hippolyte*, despite the many successes of the production, pointing out that the "exquisite setting" of the Opéra "clashes a bit with the music, with the very simple lines of the old master."[78]

Even Saint-Saëns, a tireless advocate of bringing Rameau's music to modern audiences, was willing to admit later that the 1908 experiment in producing Rameau's operas on the Parisian stage had been in some ways a failure. He was, however, confident that a successful production was possible:

> Some years ago an attempt was made to restore his [Rameau's] works to the stage; the result has not been what was anticipated. It must, however, be acknowledged at once that this was not the fault of the composer, the interpreter, or the public. This does not prove that the resurrection is impossible, failure being due to difficulties that had not been suspected.[79]

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divertissements chorégraphiques; cet orchestre, très sonore pour son temps, infiniment ingénieux en son détail, mais grêle à nos oreilles et tout primitif; ces sons plaqués ou égrenés du clavecin aigrelet, tout cela nous vient de trop loin, avec trop d'usure matérielle et, surtout, exposé trop en grand.

Supposez ces cinq actes donnés dans une petite salle, en des vues d'enseignement…j'estime que nous en saisirions mieux la grandeur historique, que nous goûterons plus intimement le charme et la grâce de ses épisodes."

[78] *Journal des débats*, 17 May 1908. "nous a été présentée par les directeurs de l'Opéra dans un cadre exquis, où des décors d'une antiquité très raffinée, raffinée au point d'être entachée de quelque modernisme, jurent bien un peu avec la musique aux lignes si simples du vieux maître…."

[79] Saint-Saëns, "A Note on Rameau," 90.

The real impediment to modern productions of Rameau's operas, according to Saint-Saëns, was not apathetic audiences or unskilled performers, but was instead technical problems of performing music from the first half of the eighteenth century. For one, the historically lower pitch meant that vocal parts were awkward for modern ranges; further problems stemmed from the difficulty of correctly reading period notation (particularly ornaments). Saint-Saëns's concerns were for recitative, which he felt should be accompanied by the orchestra rather than the harpsichord, and for orchestration, which he felt should be altered with "a very respectful and light pen" to reflect modern tastes.[80] "The difficulties are great, though not insurmountable," Saint-Saëns concluded, "and we may hope that the day will come when the music of Rameau, regarded in its true light, will no longer be confined to the erudite, but will be acclaimed by the masses."[81]

Other critics agreed that the basic problem was the attempt at historic performance practice. Victor Debay of *Le Courrier musical*, for example, agree with Saint-Saëns assessments:

> We must confess that the first impression at the beginning of the evening, without being completely disillusioning, did not entirely live up to the pleasure that one was expecting of this late-coming rehabilitation of a genius too long despised. Our ear, accustomed to the splendors of modern orchestration, finds only a meager pleasure in the more discreet charms of a continual quartet, occasionally with some woodwind instruments added. The harpsichord accompanying the recitatives seemed quite thin, with its fragile sonorities, and moreover, it had the drawback of uncovering those voices that, without the envelope of sound that normally protects them, showed the defects in their pronunciation, the softness of their attacks, and their lack of rhythm in the accentuation of the musical phrase.[82]

[80] Saint-Saëns, "A Note on Rameau," 95.

[81] Saint-Saëns, "A Note on Rameau," 96.

[82] *Le Courrier musical,* 15 May 1908. "Devons-nous avouer que la première impression au début de la soirée, sans être une désillusion toutefois, ne répondit pas entièrement au plaisir qu'on attendait de cette tardive réhabilitation d'un génie trop longtemps dédaigné. Notre oreille, accoutumée aux splendeurs de

Although Debay added later that the instrumental music and dance in the opera were much superior to the vocal element, there is still the lingering idea that *Hippolyte et Aricie* was somehow unsuited to the Opéra, and perhaps to modern audiences at all.

This unfortunate situation is explained in large part by Debay's observation that the 1908 production could not live up to the audience's lofty expectations. For more than a decade before this revival, musicologists and critics had unceasingly extolled the beauty and historical importance of Rameau's operas. Furthermore, the Parisian concert series that had performed excerpts from these works had normally chosen (in accordance with standard practice) the most palatable moments in these lengthy dramatic works. Pleasant trios, tuneful arias, and elegant dances had not adequately prepared French audiences for the passages of recitative accompanied by the harpsichord, for example, or for the fundamentally different aesthetic of Rameau's *tragédie lyrique*. Even the performances of large excerpts—or complete operas—at the Schola Cantorum were not sufficient preparation, particularly given the fact that the audiences at the Schola expected (and wanted) such musical "archeology," while audiences at the Opéra were more accustomed to "modern" works. Furthermore, the more intimate environment and lack of staging at d'Indy's productions created much different expectations regarding the acoustic and visual surroundings for Rameau's works.

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l'orchestration moderne, ne trouvait qu'un maigre régal aux charmes plus discrets d'un continuel quatuor auquel quelques instruments de bois venaient parfois s'ajouter. Le clavecin accompagnant les récitatifs semblait bien grêle avec ses sonorités fragiles, et de plus il avait l'inconvénient de mettre à découvert des voix qui, sans l'enveloppe sonore qui les pare habituellement, laissaient voir la défectuosité de leur prononciation, la mollesse de leurs attaques et leur manque de rythme dans l'accentuation de la phrase musicale."

Ultimately, despite the universally acknowledged historical importance of both *Hippolyte et Aricie* and its composer, the 1908 production failed to spark the Rameau revival that many critics had sought. Celebrating the accomplishments of the eighteenth-century master was clearly a high priority in the fiercely nationalistic climate of early twentieth-century France, but evidently audiences were unable to accept the aesthetics of the pre-Gluck *tragédie lyrique*, which were, ironically, too foreign for them to understand. Producers, likewise, were unwilling to sacrifice profit to the extent necessary to maintain Rameau in the Operatic Museum; that task would have to fall to organizations like the concert series or the Schola.

Only in 1918, in the patriotic fervor that accompanied the closing months of World War I, did Rameau appear again on the stage of the Opéra. This production was, as Suschitzky points out, "a bold, expensive gesture of defiance."[83] Since the war's beginning, the Opéra had relied on popular favorite operas in already existing productions. The Rameau opera, *Castor et Pollux*, was the only entirely new production seen during the conflict. Because the war disrupted the publication of most Parisian music periodicals, reviews of the 1918 *Castor et Pollux* are fairly few in number. What emerges from these limited sources, however, is that the production was in general better received than the 1908 *Hippolyte et Aricie*. This shift in reception seems to be linked primarily to two factors: a surge of nationalist pride in French music that went beyond even the chauvinist histories of the first decade of the twentieth century, and the Opéra's willingness to "modernize" the work somewhat for twentieth-century audiences, thus avoiding the major issues of the 1908 production.

[83] Suschitzky, "Debussy's Rameau," 398.

The press lauded the decision of the Opéra's director, Jacques Rouché, to stage a work by Rameau—a choice frequently couched in nationalist terms. Henri Quittard, for example, writing in *Le Figaro*, wrote:

> It is impossible to imagine a spectacle more artistic and, at the same time, more magnificent than the one to which the Opéra invited Paris last Thursday. In returning *Castor et Pollux*, forgotten since 1784, to the stage M. Jacques Rouché intended to…render a just homage to Rameau and one of his masterworks. With *Hippolyte et Aricie*, some years ago now, the redress of such a great injustice against our national art had begun. The performances of *Castor et Pollux* will do still more. And, truly, it is about time, after having pontificated for a number of years on French music and how it must be done in its favor, to decide that the best method for defending it is to familiarize the public with the great classics that it has produced.[84]

For Quittard, the production was directly aimed at eliminating Rameau's unjust neglect, which the critic viewed as an "injustice" to the French "national art." Furthermore, Quittard suggested that finally Parisian audiences were getting the opportunity to see the merits of French Classical music for themselves, rather than merely hearing about its virtues second-hand via critics and musicologists—with the implication being that surely the French would appreciate this great music if given a fair chance. In giving them that chance, and restoring Rameau to his rightful place, Rouché is portrayed as a musical patriot.

[84] *Le Figaro*, 23 March 1918. Il est impossible d'imaginer un spectacle plus artistique et plus magnifique à la fois que celui auquel l'Opéra, jeudi dernier, avait convie Paris. En remettant à la scène *Castor et Pollux*, oublié depuis 1784, M. Jacques Rouché se proposait…de rendre un juste hommage à Rameau et à l'un de ses chefs-d'œuvre. Avec *Hippolyte et Aricie*, voici quelques années, avait déjà commencé la réparation d'une si grande injustice envers notre art national. Les présentations de *Castor et Pollux* feront davantage encore. Et vraiment il n'est que temps, après avoir disserté depuis tant d'années sur la musique française et ce qu'il faut faire eu sa faveur, de s'aviser que le meilleur moyen de la défendre est de familiariser le public avec les grands classiques qu'elle a produits.

The same perspective is evident in other reviews of the work. In *La Presse*, Edmond Epardaud supported the Rameau production as a nationalist endeavor: "Rouché's production is a sumptuous and charming celebration. One feels that he wanted to create a dazzling demonstration of our greatest Classical musician, and he has fully succeeded in this laudable endeavor of national glorification."[85] Louis Schneider's contratulatory review in *Le Gaulois,* for example, also praised Rouché for his contributions to French music:

> [*Castor et Pollux*], which one hundred and thirty-four years of silence has slowly entombed in the dust of oblivion, forgotten, reappears to us full of youth, grace, and beauty. It is to M. Jacques Rouché, the highly artistic director of the Opéra, that we owe the miracle of this score's rebirth. He has presented it to us not as an object in a museum, or as an archeological knick-knack, but as a living thing, as the triumph of immutable French taste. Let us loudly proclaim from the rooftops this victory of our national arts of music, décor, and costuming; it has been won in full war, in the least favorable conditions that it could have produced; it is all the more brilliant for that.[86]

In unbridled nationalist rhetoric, the critic situated Rameau's opera as part of a historical tradition of great French works, describing the production as a "triumph of immutable French taste." Moreover, Schneider suggested that this victory—an implied victory over Germany and its musical styles—should be "loudly proclaimed," both because it

[85] *La Presse*, 23 March 1918. "La réalisation de M. Rouché est une fête somptueuse et charmante. On sent qu'il a voulu faire sur le nom de notre plus grand musicien classique une manifestation éclatante et il a pleinement réussi dans cette louable tentative de glorification nationale."

[86] *Le Gaulois*, 24 March 1918. "[*Castor et Pollux*], que cent trente-quatre années de silence ont lentement ensevelie dans la poussière de l'oublie, nous est réapparue forte de jeunesse, de grâce, de beauté. C'est à M. Jacques Rouché, très artiste directeur de l'Opéra, que nous devons le miracle de la renaissance de cette partition. Il nous à présentée, non pas comme un objet de musée, ou comme un bibelot archéologique, mais comme une chose vivante, comme le triomphe de l'inaltérable goût français. Claironnons bien haut cette victoire de notre art national de la musique, du décor, et du costume; elle a été gagnée en peine guerre, dans les conditions les moins favorables où elle pouvait se produire; elle n'en est que plus éclatante."

demonstrated the skill in their "national arts of music, décor, and costuming" and because it was a wartime triumph of French music against the hegemonic influence of German music.

Schneider's review also illustrates the differences between of the 1918 *Castor et Pollux* and the 1908 *Hippolyte et Aricie* in terms of how the work was perceived as a "Classic" work. The critic makes clear that *Castor* was not presented as "an object in a museum, or as an archeological knick-knack"—in other words, it was not presented in the same way as *Hippolyte* had been a decade earlier. For Schneider, the idea of an Operatic Museum was acceptable, as far as the idea of presenting "Classic" operas went, but the works in it had to be "living" works of art, adapted for modern taste rather than kept in pristine, historically accurate "museum" condition. The 1918 production seems to have followed Schneider's line of thought, adapting the music to modern tastes to a much greater extent than the 1908 production had. Epardaud, for example, wrote that:

> Rameau's music seems to us comfortable among these subtleties of sound, of forms, and of the attitudes that it inspired. Perhaps the scale of the means used led a bit to the distortion of its intimate and quaint graces. And the opera's orchestra without doubt makes one forget the sour original harpsichord a bit too much.
>
> But in this attempt at modernization, useful enough, by the way, one must praise the skill and excellent taste of the conductor, M. Bachelet.[87]

For Epardaud, like Schneider, this new production was less a presentation of a museum piece than a "modernization" of a Classical work. Though the critic acknowledged the

[87] *La Presse*, 23 March 1918. "La musique de Rameau nous parut donc à son aise parmi ces subtilités de tons, de formes et d'attitudes qu'elle inspira. Peut-être l'ampleur des moyens utilisés contribua-t-elle un peu à en dénaturer les grâces intimes et surannées. Et l'orchestre de l'opéra faisait sans doute un peu trop oublier l'aigre clavecin originel.

Mais dans cet essai de modernisation, assez utile, d'ailleurs, il faut louer l'habileté de l'adaptateur et le goût excellent du chef, M. Bachelet."

downside of the departures from the original score, he found the overall effect of this "useful" modernization to be in "excellent taste." Jullien, a difficult critic to please, was also satisfied with the production, which he thought was a "very skillful sort of compromise between the new art of our time and that of the eighteenth century," and found that "one cannot praise the director of the Opéra enough" for choosing to revive Rameau's opera.[88]

This change in Rameau's presentation is revealing. The 1908 production had (despite the questionable editing practices that d'Indy used in his edition) aimed at displaying a historical object, a museum piece dedicated to demonstrating the glories of French Classical music. The 1918 *Castor et Pollux*, however, was aimed at appealing to French audiences whatever the cost to historical "authenticity." The need for modern Parisian audiences to enjoy and respond to Rameau's operas, a figurehead for French artistic triumph, outweighed the desire for a "historically accurate" version of his music. The "educative" aspect of the Operatic Museum was downplayed in favor of a more explicitly "nationalist" goal. "Modernizing" *Castor et Pollux* allowed Parisian audiences—broad audiences, not merely those who advocated "authentic" interpretations of Classical works—to connect to the music in a deeper way, and thus created a sense of national heritage and pride in the achievements of the eighteenth-century French composer.

The critic Théodore Lindenlaub certainly found that the audience for *Castor et Pollux* was affected in an atypically personal manner, much more so than any critics reported for previous attempts at performing Rameau's operas on the *fin-de-siècle* stage:

[88] *Le Journal des débats*, 3 April 1918. "une sorte de compromis très habile entre l'art nouveau de notre époque et celui du dix-huitième siècle"; "l'on n'en saurait trop complimenter le directeur de l'Opéra"

> For the diverse crowd of the vast Opéra yesterday, this music was something at once famous and unknown. And, once the curtain fell, when it [the crowd] returned to the street after leaving this sung tragedy, it was the street, and the city, and everything tangible that seemed to them artificial and fragile. A rare victory of order and harmony over that pell-mell of passersby, a sudden and profound revelation of the only reality that exists, that of the interior life. That is what a master of old created in a gathering of people today. Those are the effects and the marks of genius, and this is how they manifested themselves the other day, in the middle of circumstances that were surely the most adverse to such a kind of metamorphosis of the soul. But it is the distinctiveness of genius to position its universe in opposition to the other, and to delight the living.[89]

Rameau was, as a genius, able to reach across the chronological divide and speak directly to his modern audience, touching their souls. Such was, particularly during the war, the goal of the Operatic Museum. By presenting opera goers with the greatest triumphs of France's musical past, narrating its musical history, the Museum was able to instill in listeners a sense of national artistic accomplishment and self-worth in the fiercely patriotic atmosphere of World War I.

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More than was the case with either Mozart or Gluck, Rameau's reception during the years from 1875 to 1918 illustrates the remarkable capabilities of the Operatic Museum. By displaying Rameau's operas, the Museum was able to support, and even create, nationalist narratives capable of changing how opera-goers understood and appreciated French music history. Before 1900, the idea of resurrecting Rameau's works

[89] *Le Temps*, 1 April 1918. "Hier, pour la foule diverse du vaste Opéra, cette musique était à la fois quelque chose d'illustre et d'inconnu. Et, le rideau baissé, quand elle rentre dans la rue, au sortir de cette tragédie chantée, c'est la rue et la ville et tout le palpable qui lui semble factice et comme fragile. Victoire rare de l'ordre et de l'harmonie sur le pêle-mêle de ce qui passe, soudaine et profonde révélation sur la seule réalité qui soit, celle de la vie intérieure. Voilà ce qu'a crée un maître d'autrefois dans un rassemblement d'hommes d'aujourd'hui. Ce sont là les effets et les marques du génie, et tels ils se sont manifestés, l'autre jour, au milieu des circonstances les plus contraires assurément à cette sorte de métamorphose des âmes. Mais c'est le propre du génie de poser son univers vis-à-vis de l'autre et d'y ravir les vivants."

on the stage of Paris Opéra—certainly the most prestigious dramatic venue in France, and arguably in all of Europe—was unthinkable. Less than two decades later, the second lavish Rameau revival of the twentieth century was hailed as a triumph of French musical taste and refinement, and was perceived as one of the greatest musical events of the early twentieth century. The roots of the Operatic Museum had not only taken hold in the musical culture of *fin-de-siècle* France, but had born fruit, sustaining nationalist narratives of music history and supporting the development of a new conception of opera houses, in which works from many centuries could co-exist comfortably. This remarkable reconceptualization had long-lasting effects on how producers and audiences alike conceived of the nature of opera houses, and of music history in general.

# CONCLUSION

By the end of World War I, the idea of the Operatic Museum had firmly taken root. The revivals of "Classical" operas than had taken place over the course of the *fin-de-siècle* had fundamentally altered how the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique did business, encouraging the theaters to establish a core repertoire of eighteenth-century "masterworks" to supplement more modern works. The value of such works went largely unquestioned by critics and musicologists, who saw an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of music history in a manner possible only on the grand stages of France's national theaters. And, perhaps more importantly, audiences had proved that they were willing to embrace these eighteenth-century works, proving to theater managers that an Operatic Museum could provide financial, in addition to cultural, capital.

The three composers whose works had for decades been the cornerstone for the budding development of the Operatic Museum in Paris—Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Christoph Willibald von Gluck, and Jean-Philippe Rameau—remained crucial to its continued existence after World War I. During the 1920s at least one opera by each composer received a production at either the Opéra or Opéra-Comique (see Figure 1).

| Composer | Opera | Date | Location of Production |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mozart | Così fan tutte | 1920 | Opéra-Comique |
| Mozart | La Flûte enchantée | 1922 | Opéra |
| Rameau | Les Indes galantes (likely excerpts) | 1925 | Opéra-Comique |
| Gluck | Armide | 1926 | Opéra |
| Mozart | La Flûte enchantée | 1929 | Opéra |

**Figure 1: "Classical" Operas in 1920s Paris**

Mozart's *Così fan tutte* was produced at the Opéra in 1920, marking its first performance in a state-run French theater, a fact that eloquently demonstrates the renewed interest in the composer and his operas after the war. Gluck's *Armide* appeared at the Opéra in 1926, proving to audiences and critics that his revival in the 1890s and 1900s was more than a mere fad, and that the composer could be more than merely a French replacement for Mozart or a foil for Wagner. Rameau's works, though destined never to become a major part of the permanent operatic repertoire at the Opéra or the Opéra-Comique, were nonetheless able to avoid the neglect that they had experienced in the nineteenth century. *Les Indes galantes* (or at least large excerpts from the work) was seen at the Opéra-Comique in 1925, the first time the work had been staged in Paris since the eighteenth century.

After 1918, the focus of the Operatic Museum in Paris began to shift. For decades, it had been primarily a nationalist enterprise, aimed at providing a concrete display of France's historical tradition of musical greatness. The focus on operas by Rameau, Gluck, and Mozart (at least in terms of the "French" *Don Juan*) is still evident, particularly in the relative frequency of works by Rameau and Gluck as opposed to in other opera houses, but after the close of World War I the Operatic Museum began to

take on a more universalist character. The victory of France and its allies during that conflict to some extent vindicated the French, mitigating the intense need to demonstrate French greatness that had come to the forefront of nationalist thought after the humiliating defeat of 1870.

As time has progressed, the definition of a "Classic" work has changed somewhat. The core repertoire of the Operatic Museum—works that are by nature not "modern" and are in a sense being preserved beyond their initial lifespan—has expanded to include the nineteenth-century composers typically connected with opera houses of any nationality: Rossini, Donizetti, Verdi, and, perhaps most prominently, Wagner. While these composers were no strangers to the stage throughout the nineteenth-century, they gradually ceased being considered "modern" works and were placed alongside Mozart and his compatriots in the Museum.

The success of the Operatic Museum as a concept, in fact, has fundamentally altered the nature of most major opera houses, in Paris and beyond. The sheer number of works contained in the Museum requires that "preserved" should comprise the vast majority of new productions. Indeed, it is nearly impossible today to conceive of an opera house in which Museum-pieces would not form the backbone of the repertoire. *New York Times* critic Will Crutchfield certainly had this model in mind when he referred (disparagingly) to the Metropolitan Opera as the "Metropolitan Museum of Opera" in 1987.[1] By the late twentieth century, it was absolutely clear that most of the world's

[1] *The New York Times*, 18 June 1987. The phrase has become fairly common since Crutchfield's article. Leo Kraft, as one example, railed against the very idea of the Operatic Museum (at least to the extent that its ideology dominates theaters today), pointing out that "the Metropolitan Museum of Opera devotes its not inconsiderable energies trying to revive the moribund mediocrities of past centuries for the delectation of soprano fanciers" rather than presenting new works. Leo Kraft, "The Death of Klinghoffer," *Perspectives of New Music* 30 (1992), 300.

opera houses had “embraced,” in Crutchfield’s words, their “museum-only role.” No longer were “Classic” works presented in dialogue with newer works, as most *fin-de-siècle* critics had advocated, but this permanent collection of older works had reserved their space *ad infinitum*, effectively relegating newer operas to less prestigious (or at least less venerable) venues.

In Paris, this critical transition—this radical, if gradual, rethinking of the role of opera houses in culture—took place in the years around 1900. In seeking to create and maintain a tangible master narrative of music history, one that audiences could see and hear, opera producers changed the way in which they conceived of an opera house. For the first time, they actively looked not to the present or future of the genre in their planning, but searched out and rehabilitated masterpieces from the musical past to place on the stage. The discovery that such an endeavor—initially aimed more at producing badly needed nationalist cultural capital than actually generating revue—could actually be lucrative no doubt encouraged producers to continue to fill the Opéra and Opéra-Comique with museum pieces.

This environment of universalist preservation of musical works dominates the theaters today, rendering the opera houses fully into Operatic Museums, literal places of musical memory (*lieux de mémoire musicale*, to borrow from Pierre Nora). And despite the vast possibilities of historical music producers could choose, the most recent seasons of the Opéra national de Paris—the national opera company that performs at the Palais Garnier and the Opéra Bastille—reveal the extent to which operas by Mozart, Gluck, and Rameau still dominate the Operatic Museum, at least in terms of eighteenth-century works. The 2005–2006 season for the Opéra national de Paris saw a spate of Mozart

productions at the Palais Garnier during the composer's 250th anniversary year, including new productions of *La Clemenza di Tito*, *Così fan tutte*, *Don Giovanni* and *Idomeneo*; Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* appeared in the same season. The 2008–2009 season prominently featured *Die Zauberflöte*. The eighteenth-century operas on the 2009–2010 season for the Opéra were Rameau's *Platée* and, once again, Mozart's *Idomeneo*. No other pre-nineteenth century operas appeared during any of these seasons, though of course many productions of operas by Lully and others have appeared at smaller, more specialized theaters in recent years. While the specific contents of the Operatic Museum have been rotating and shifting, the earliest entries—eighteenth-century operas—have been more or less a permanent collection for over a century. With these works, France's most prominent musical institutions truly put music history on display for Parisian citizens, constructing narratives that shape audiences' perceptions of the past, present, and future.

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